

M A G A Z I N E O F

# HORROR

THE BIZARRE, THE FRIGHTENING, THE GRUESOME

WINTER No. 12

ACME 50c

## THE FACELESS GOD

by  
Robert Bloch

## THE AFFAIR AT 7 RUE de M—

by  
John Steinbeck

## MASTER NICHOLAS

by  
Seabury Quinn

## THE BLACK BEAST

by  
Henry S. Whitehead

## THE ABYSS

by  
R. A. W. Lowndes



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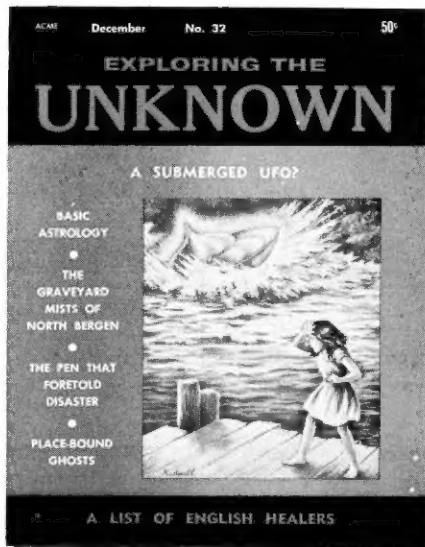
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# magazine of **HORROR**

## **The Bizarre and The Unusual**

*Volume 2*

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**Robert A. W. Lowndes, Editor**

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# Introduction

"Yesterday I bought my first copy of **Magazine of Horror**," writes Carrington B. Dixon, Jr., from Texas, "and I am impressed. The quality of the stories that I have read so far is quite high. . . .

"... The logotype, however, is atrocious. The crudely drawn letters with the gore dripping from them look extremely cheap. The rest of the cover layout is very well done, but the logo detracts so much that the over-all impression is quite negative. Had the magazine not been recommended to me by a friend, I would not have given it a second look."

I showed this letter to our publisher, who is no less concerned than I with trying to make MOH (a) attractive in appearance to the newsstand purchaser (b) as high quality in content as we can make it. I said to him that this still represents a minority opinion, so far as we hear from you, the readers, but that more and more of you are saying it. And since we have a strong, colorful cover by Morrow, this time, I suggested that we try a less "cheap" looking logotype. We want one which will "catch the eye" — a trademark — but won't do so in the negative way that many readers have said that the logotype we've been using has done.

If you feel that the present logotype is an improvement, then here is evidence that your letters and comments can have some good effect upon us. Mr. Dixon's letter, added to the other letters we have received, brought the issue to boil; it was the right letter, received at the right time. Yesterday. I would have thought that there was no possibility of changing the logo (which, I, personally, did not prefer) until and unless other matters showed the magazine making progress — and a great many more complaints about the former logo came in. Mr. Dixon did not know that his letter would be effective; he wrote it, hoping; none of the rest of you who wrote earlier knew whether your letters would have any effect . . . and so it goes.

*(Turn to Page 118)*

# The Faceless God

by Robert Bloch

In the November 1934 issue of *WEIRD TALES*, a letter appeared in *The Eyrie*, written by Robert Bloch, who had been seen in this department earlier. There are two notable things about it (1) he expresses dislike for Robert E. Howard's character Conan, whom he claims "is rapidly becoming a stereotyped hero" (2) Editor Wright comments, "Sharpen your axes, you loyal supporters of the Conan tales, for anon we shall publish a short story by Mr. Bloch, the author of the above letter. It is entitled *The Secret in the Tomb*." (The readers saw a different story by Bloch, however — *The Feast in the Abbey*, January 1935 — before the tale Wright announced appeared.)

The letter brought forth several protests from readers, who felt that one author should not criticise another; but later we learned that Wright had not been quite fair in publishing Bloch's letter, which was written *before* he knew that he was about to become an author. At the time, Bloch was hopeful that some of his tales might sell, but had not heard any good news; he wrote the letter strictly as a reader — and an admirer of Howard's tales, who felt that REH was going off the track with Conan.

Most readers, apparently, did not hold this affair against young Mr. Bloch. for his tale in the January 1935 issue tied for first place with works by Clark Ashton Smith, Seabury Quinn, and Laurence J. Cahill. He is one of the many WT authors who received effective encouragement and help from H. P. Lovecraft, whose type of story Bloch imitated at times.

He is one of the few fantasy writers who became thorough fantasy and science fiction "fans" after they attained their reputations as authors, and Bloch's appearances with both thoughtful and humorous articles in fan magazines, as well as his performances as MC at conventions, are far too numerous to mention. To most people who recognize his name today, very likely *Psycho* will be the first association; but to oldtimers, Robert Bloch will ever be recalled for his brief anti-Conan activities and the vigorous stories he wrote for Wright during his first period of authorship. Our thanks to JAMES EDWARD TURNER who was the first to ask for the present tale.



THE THING ON the torture-rack began to moan. There was a grating sound as the lever stretched the iron bed still one more space in length. The moaning grew to a piercing shriek of utter agony.

"Ah," said Doctor Stugatche, "we have him at last."

He bent over the tortured man on the iron grille and smiled tenderly into the anguished face. His eyes, tinged with delicate amusement, took in every detail of the body before him — the swollen legs, raw and angry from the embrace of the fiery boot; the lacerated back and shoulders, still crimson from the kiss of the lash; the bloody, mangled remnants of a chest crushed by the caress of the Spiked Coffin. With gentle solicitude he surveyed the finishing touches applied by the rack itself — the dislocated shoulders and twisted torso; the crushed and broken fingers, and the dangling tendons in the lower limbs. Then he turned his attention to the old man's tormented countenance once again.

"Well, Hassan. I do not think you will prove stubborn any longer in the face of such — ah — eloquent persuasion. Come now; tell me where I can find this idol of which you speak."

The butchered victim began to sob, and the doctor was forced to kneel beside the bed of pain in order to understand his incoherent mumblings. For perhaps twenty minutes the creature groaned on, and then at last fell silent. Doctor Stugatche rose to his feet once more, a satisfied twinkle in his genial eyes. He made a brief motion to one of the blacks operating the rack machinery. The fellow nodded, and went over to the living horror on the instrument. It was crying now — its tears were blood. The black drew his sword. It swished upward, then cleaved down once again. There was a dull sound of crunching impact, and then a tiny fountain spurted upward, spreading a scarlet blot upon the wall behind . . .

Doctor Stugatche went out of the room, bolted the door behind him, and climbed the steps to the house above. As he raised the barred trap-door he saw that the sun was shining. The doctor began to whistle. He was very pleased.

## 2

HE HAD good reason to be. For several years the doctor had been what is vulgarly known as an "adventurer". He had been a smuggler of antiques, an exploiter of labor on the upper Nile, and had at

times participated in the forbidden "black goods trade" that flourished at certain ports along the Red Sea. He had come out to Egypt many years ago as an attache on an archeological expedition, from which he had been summarily dismissed. The reason for his dismissal is not known, but it was rumored that he had been caught trying to appropriate certain of the expeditionary trophies. After his exposure and subsequent disgrace, he had disappeared for a while. Several years later he had come back to Cairo and set up an establishment in the native quarter. It was here that he fell into habits of business which had earned for him a dubious reputation and a sizable profit. He seemed well satisfied with both.

At the present time he was a man of perhaps forty-five years of age, short and heavy-set, with a bullet-shaped head that rested on broad, ape-like shoulders. His thick torso and bulging paunch were supported by a pair of spindly legs that contrasted oddly with the upper portions of his beefy body.

Ordinarily he was not a credulous man. The usual tales of lost pyramids, buried treasure and stolen mummies did not impress him. He preferred something more substantial. A contraband consignment of rugs; a bit of smuggled opium;

something in the line of illicit human merchandise — these were things he could appreciate and understand.

But this case was different. Extraordinary as it sounded, it meant big money. Stugatche was smart enough to know that many of the great discoveries of Egyptology had been prompted by just such wild rumors as the one he had heard. He also knew the difference between improbable truth and spurious invention. This story sounded like the truth.

In brief, it ran as follows. A certain party of nomads, while engaged in a secret journey with a cargo of illegitimately obtained goods, were traversing a special route of their own. They did not feel that the regular caravan lanes were healthful for them to follow. While traveling near a certain spot they had accidentally espied a curious rock or stone in the sands. The thing had evidently been buried, but long years of shifting and swirling among the dunes above it had served to uncover a portion of the object. They had stopped to inspect it at closer range, and thereby made a startling discovery. The thing projecting from the sand was the head of a statue; an ancient Egyptian statue, with the triple crown of a god! Its black body was still submerged, but the head seemed to be

in perfect preservation. It was a very peculiar thing, that head, and none of the natives could or would recognize the deity, though the caravan leaders questioned them closely. The whole thing was an unfathomable mystery. A perfectly preserved statue of an unknown god buried all alone in the southern desert, a long way from any oasis, and hundred miles from the smallest village!

Evidently the caravan men realized something of its uniqueness; for they ordered that two boulders which lay nearby be placed on top of the idol as a marker in case they ever returned. The men did as they were ordered, though they were obviously reluctant, and kept muttering prayers beneath their breath. They seemed very much afraid of the buried image, but only reiterated their ignorance when questioned further concerning it.

After the boulders had been placed, the expedition was forced to journey on, for time did not permit them to unearth the curious figure in its entirety, or attempt to carry it with them. When they returned to the north they told their story, and as most tales were in the habit of doing, it came to the ears of Doctor Stugatche. Stugatche thought fast. It was quite evident that the original discoverers of the idol did not

attach any great importance to their find. For this reason the doctor might easily return to the spot and unearth the statue without any trouble, once he knew exactly where it was located.

STUGATCHE FELT that it was worth finding. If it had been a treasure yarn, now, he would have scoffed and unhesitatingly put it down as a cock-and-bull story of the usual variety. But an idol — that was different. He could understand why an ignorant band of Arab smugglers might ignore such a discovery. He could also realize that such a discovery might prove more valuable to him than all the treasure in Egypt. It was easy for him to remember the vague clues and wild hints that had prompted the finding of early explorers. They had followed up many blind leads when first they plumbed the pyramids and racked the temple ruins. All of them were tomb-looters at heart, but their ravishings had made them rich and famous. Why not him, then? If the tale were true, and this idol not only buried, but totally unknown as a deity; in perfect condition, and in such an out-of-the-way locality — these facts would create a furor when he exhibited his find. He would be famous! Who knew what hitherto untrodden fields he



might open up in archeology? It was well worth chancing.

But he must not arouse any suspicion. He dared not inquire about the place from any of the Arabs who had been there. That would immediately cause talk. No, he must get his directions from a native in the band. Accordingly, two of his servants picked up Hassan, the old camel-driver, and brought him before Stugatche in his house.

Hassan, when questioned, looked very much afraid; he refused to talk. So Stugatche conducted him into his little reception room in the cellar, where he had been wont to entertain certain recalcitrant guests in the past. Here the doctor, whose knowledge of anatomy stood him in good stead, was able to cajole his visitor into speaking. Doctor Stugatche emerged from the cellar in a very pleasant frame of mind. He looked at the map to verify his information, and went out to dinner with a smiling face.

Two days later he was ready to start. He had hired a small number of natives, so as not to excite undue investigation, and given out to his business acquaintances that he was about to embark on a special trip. He engaged a strange dragoman, and made sure that the fellow would keep his mouth shut. There were several swift camels

in the train, and a number of extra donkeys harnessed to a large empty cart. He took food and water for six days, for he intended to return via river-boat. After the arrangements were completed, the party assembled one morning at a certain spot unknown to official eyes, and the expedition began.

## 3

IT WAS ON the morning of the fourth day that they arrived at last. Stugatche saw the stones from his precarious perch atop the leading camel. He swore delightedly, and despite the hovering heat, dismounted and raced over to the spot where the two boulders lay. A moment later he called the company to a hasty halt and issued orders for the immediate erection of the tents, and the usual preparations for encampment. Utterly disregarding the intolerable warmth of the day, he saw to it that the sweating natives did a thorough job; and then, without allowing them a moment's rest, he instructed them to remove the massive rocks from their resting-place. A crew of straining men managed to topple them over at last, and clear away the underlying sand.

In a few moments there was a loud cry from the gang of laborers, as a black and sinister head came into view. It was a

triple-crowned blasphemy. Great spiky cones adorned the top of the ebony diadem, and beneath them were hidden intricately executed designs. He bent down and examined them. They were monstrous, both in subject and in execution. He saw the writhing, worm-like shapes of primal monsters, and headless, slimy creatures from the stars. There were bloated beasts in the robes of men, and ancient Egyptian gods in hideous combat with squirming demons from the gulf. Some of the designs were foul beyond description, and others hinted of unclean terrors that were old when the world was young. But all were evil; and Stugatche could not gaze at them without feeling a horror that ate at his brain.

As for the natives, they were openly frightened. The moment that the top of the image came into view, they began to jabber hysterically. They retreated to the side of the excavation and began to argue and mumble, pointing occasionally at the kneeling figure of the doctor. Absorbed in his inspection, Stugatche failed to catch the body of their remarks, or note the air of menace which radiated from the sullen dragoman. Once or twice he heard some vague references to the name "Nyarlothotep", and a few allusions to "The Demon Messenger".

After completing his scrutiny the doctor rose to his feet and ordered the men to proceed with the excavation. No one moved. Impatiently he repeated his command. The natives stood by, their heads hung, but their faces were stolid. At last the dragoman stepped forward and began to harangue the *effendi*.

He and his men would never have come with their master had they known what they were expected to do. They would not touch the statue of the god, and they warned the doctor to keep his hands off. It was bad business to incur the wrath of the Old God — the Secret One. But perhaps he had not heard of Nyarlothotep, the oldest god of all Egypt; of all the world. He was the God of Resurrection, and the Black Messenger of Karneter. There was a legend that one day he would arise and bring the olden dead to life. And his curse was one to be avoided.

Stugatche, listening, began to lose his temper. Angrily he interrupted, ordering the men to stop gawking and resume their work. He backed up this command with two Colt .32 revolvers. He would take all the blame for this desecration, he shouted, and he was not afraid of any damned stone idol in the world.

The natives seemed properly impressed both by the revolv-

ers and by his fluent profanity. They began to dig again, timidly.

A FEW HOURS' work sufficed for the men to uncover the idol. If the crown of its stony head had hinted of horror, the face and body openly proclaimed it. The image was obscene and shockingly malignant. There was an indescribably *alien* quality about it — it was ageless, unchanging, eternal. Not a scratch marred its black and crudely chiseled surface; during all its many-centuried burial there had been no weathering upon the fiendishly carved features. Stugatche saw it now as it must have looked when it was first buried, and the sight was not good to see.

It resembled a miniature sphinx — a life-sized sphinx with the wings of a vulture and the body of a hyena. There were talons and claws, and upon the squatting, bestial body rested a massive, anthropomorphic head, bearing the ominous triple crown whose dread designs had so singularly excited the natives. But the worst and by far the most hideous feature was the lack of a face upon the ghastly thing. It was a faceless god; the winged, faceless god of ancient myth — Nyarlathotep, Mighty Messenger, Stalker among the Stars, and Lord of the Desert.

When Stugatche completed his examination at last, he became almost hysterically happy. He grinned triumphantly into that blank and loathsome countenance — grinned into that faceless orifice that yawned as vacantly as the black void beyond the suns. In his enthusiasm he failed to notice the furtive whispers of the natives and the guides, and disregarded their fearsome glances at the unclean eidolon. Had he not done so, he might have been a wiser man; for these men knew, as all Egypt knows, that Nyarlathotep is the Master of Evil.

Not for nothing had his temples been demolished, his statues destroyed, and his priestcraft crucified in the olden days. There were dark and terrible reasons for prohibiting his worship, and omitting his name from the *Book of the Dead*. All references to the Faceless One were long since deleted from the Sacred Manuscripts, and great pains had been taken to ignore some of his godly attributes, or assign them to some milder deity. In Thoth, Set, Bubastis and Sebek we can trace some of the Master's grisly endowments. It was he, in the most archaic of the chronicles, who was ruler of the Underworld. It was he who became the patron of sorcery and the black arts. Once he alone had ruled, and men knew him in all

lands, under many names. But that time passed. Men turned away from the worship of evil, and revered the good. They did not care for the gruesome sacrifice the Dark God demanded, nor the way his priests ruled. At last the cult was suppressed, and by common consent all references to it were forever banned, and its record destroyed. But Nyarlathotep had come out out of the desert, according to the legend, and to the desert he now returned. Idols were set up in hidden places among the sands, and here the thin, fanatical ranks of true believers still leapt and capered in naked worship, where the cries of shrieking victims echoed only to the ears of the night.

So his legend remained and was handed down in the secret ways of the earth. Time passed. In the north the ice-flow receded, and Atlantis fell. New peoples overran the land, but the desert folk remained. They viewed the building of the pyramids with amused and cynical eyes. Wait, they counseled. When the Day arrived at last, Nyarlathotep again would come out of the desert, and then woe unto Egypt! For the pyramids would shatter into dust, and temples crumble to ruin. Sunk-en cities of the sea would rise, and there would be famine and pestilence throughout the land.

The stars would change in a most peculiar way, so that the Great Ones could come pulsing from the outer gulf. Then the beasts should give tongue, and prophesy in their anthropoglotism that man shall perish. By these signs, and other apocalyptic portents, the world would know that Nyarlathotep had returned. Soon he himself would be visible — a dark faceless man in black, walking, staff in hand, across the desert, but leaving no track to mark his way, save that of death. For wherever his footsteps turned men would surely die, until at last none but true believers remained to welcome him in worship with the Mighty Ones from the gulfs.

Such, in its essence, was the fable of Nyarlathotep. It was older than secret Egypt, more hoary than sea-doomed Atlantis, more ancient than time-forgotten Mu. But it has never been forgotten. In the medieval times this story and its prophecy were carried across Europe by returning crusaders. Thus the Mighty Messenger became the Black Man of the witch-covens; the emissary of Asmodeus and darker gods. His name is mentioned cryptically in the *Necronomicon*, for Alhazred heard it whispered in tales of shadowed Irem. The fabulous *Book of Eibon* hints at the myth in veiled and diverse ways, for

it was writ in a far-off time when it was not yet deemed safe to speak of things that had walked upon the earth when it was young. Ludvig Prinn, who traveled in Saracenic lands and learned strange sorceries, awesomely implies his knowledge in the infamous *Mysteries of the Worm*.

But his worship, in late years, seems to have died out. There is no mention of it in Sir James Frazer's *Golden Bough*, and most reputable ethnologists and anthropologists are frankly ignorant of the Faceless One's history. But there are idols still intact, and some whisper of certain caverns beneath the Nile, and of burrows below the Ninth Pyramid. The secret signs and symbols of his worship are gone, but there are some undecipherable hieroglyphs in the Government vaults which are very closely concealed. And men know. By word of mouth the tale has come down through the ages, and there are those who still wait for the Day. By common consent there seem to be certain spots in the desert which are carefully avoided by caravans, and several secluded shrines are shunned by those who remember. For Nyarlathotep is the God of the Desert, and his ways are best left unprofaned.

IT WAS THIS knowledge

which prompted the uneasiness of the natives upon the discovery of that peculiar idol in the sand. When they had first noted the head-dress they had been afraid, and after seeing that featureless face they became frantic with dread. As for Doctor Stugatche, his fate did not matter to them. They were concerned only with themselves, and their course was plainly apparent. They must flee, and flee at once.

Stugatche paid no attention to them. He was busy making plans for the following day. They would place the idol on a wheeled cart and harness the donkeys. Once back to the river it could be put on board the steamer. What a find! He conjured up pleasant visions of the fame and fortune that would be his. Scavenger, was he? Unsavory adventurer, eh? Charlatan, cheat, impostor, they had called him. How those smug official eyes would pop when they beheld his discovery! Heaven only knew what vistas this thing might open up. There might be other altars, other idols; tombs and temples too, perhaps. He knew vaguely that there was some absurd legend about the worship of this diety, but if he could only get his hands on a few more natives who could give him the information he wanted . . . He smiled, musingly. Funny, those

superstitious myths! The boys were afraid of the statue; that was plainly apparent. The dragoman, now, with his stupid quotations. How did it go?

"Nyarlathep is the Black Messenger of Karneter. He comes from out the desert, across the burning sands, and stalks his prey throughout the world, which is the land of his domain."

Silly! All Egyptian myths were stupid. Statues with animal heads suddenly coming to life; reincarnation of men and gods, foolish kings building pyramids for mummies. Well, a lot of fools believed it; not only the natives, either. He knew some cranks who credited the stories about the Pharaoh's curse, and the magic of the old priests. There were a lot of wild tales about the ancient tombs and the men who died when they invaded them. No wonder his own simple natives believed such trash! But whether they believed it or not, they were going to move his idol, damn them, even if he had to shoot them down to make them obey.

He went into his tent, well satisfied. The boy served him his meal, and Stugatche dined heartily as was his wont. Then he decided to retire early, in anticipation of his plans for the following morning. The boys could tend to the camp, he de-

cided. Accordingly he lay down on his cot and soon fell into a contented, peaceful slumber.

## 4

IT MUST HAVE been several hours later that he awoke. It was very dark, and the night was strangely still. Once he heard the far-away howl of a hunting jackal, but it soon blended into somber silence. Surprised at his sudden awakening, Stugatche rose and went to the door of the tent, pulling back the flap to gaze into the open. A moment later he cursed in frenzied rage.

The camp was deserted. The fire had died out, the men and camels had disappeared. Footprints, already half obliterated by the sands, showed the silent haste in which the natives had departed. The fools had left him here alone.

He was lost. The knowledge sent a sudden stab of fear to his heart. Lost! The men were gone, the food was gone, the camels and donkeys had disappeared. He had neither weapons nor water, and he was all alone. He stood before the door of the tent and gazed, terrified, at the vast and lonely desert. The moon gleamed like a silver skull in an ebony sky. A sudden hot wind ruffled the endless ocean of sand, and sent it skirling in tiny waves at his



feet. Then came silence, ceaseless silence. It was like the silence of the pyramids, where in crumbling sarcophagi the mummies lie, their dead eyes gazing into unchanging and unending darkness. Stugatche felt indescribably small and lonely there in the night, and he was conscious of strange and baleful powers that were weaving the threads of his destiny into a final tragic pattern. Nyarlathotep! He *knew*, and was wreaking an immutable vengeance.

But that was nonsense. Stugatche must not let himself be troubled by such fantastic rubbish. That was just another form of desert mirage; a common enough delusion under such circumstances. He must not lose his nerve now. He must face the facts calmly. The men had absconded with the supplies and the horses because of some crazy native superstition. That was real enough. As for the superstition itself, he must not let it bother him. Those frantic and morbid fancies of his would vanish quickly enough with the morning sun.

The morning sun! A terrible thought assailed him — the fearsome reality of the desert at midday. To reach an oasis he would be forced to travel day and night before the lack of food and water weakened him so that he could not go on. There would be no escape once

he left this tent; no refuge from that pitiless blazing eye whose glaring rays could scorch his brain to madness. To die in the heat of the desert — that was an unthinkable agony. He must get back; his work was not yet completed. There must be a new expedition to recover the idol. He must get back! He must hurry. But where?

HE GAZED AROUND frantically, trying to get his bearings. The desert mocked him with its monotonous, inscrutable horizon. For a moment black despair clutched at his brain, and then came a sudden inspiration. He must go north, of course. And he recalled, now, the chance words let fall by the dragoman that afternoon. The statue of Nyarlathotep faced north! Jubilantly he ransacked the tent for any remnants of food or provisions. There were none. Matches and tobacco he carried, and in his kit he found a hunting-knife. He was almost confident when he left the tent. The rest of the journey would now be childishly simple. He would travel all night and make as much time as he could. His pack-blanket would probably shield him from the noonday sun tomorrow, and in late afternoon he would resume his course after the worst of the heat had abated. By quick

marches tomorrow night, he ought to find himself near the Wadi Hassur oasis upon the following morning. All that remained for him to do was to get out to the idol and set his course, since the tracks of his party in the sand were already obscured.

Triumphantly, he strode across the camp-clearing to the excavation where the image stood. And it was there that he received his greatest shock.

The idol had been reinterred! The workmen had not left the statue violated, but had completely filled in the excavation, even taking the precaution of placing the two original stones over the top. Stugatche could not move them single-handed, and when he realized the extent of this calamity he was filled with an overpowering dismay. He was defeated. Cursing would do no good, and in his heart he could not even hope to pray. Nyarlathotep — Lord of the Desert!

It was with a new and deathly fear that he began his journey, choosing a course at random, and hoping against hope that the sudden clouds would lift so that he could have the guidance of the stars. But the clouds did not lift, and only the moon grinned grimly down at the stumbling figure that struggled through the sand.

Dervish dreams flitted

through Stugatche's consciousness as he walked. Try as he might, the legend of the god haunted him with a sense of impending fulfillment. Vainly he tried to force his drugged mind to forget the suspicions that tormented it. He could not. Over and over again he found himself shivering with fear at the thought of a godly wrath pursuing him to his doom. He had violated a sacred spot, and the Old Ones remember . . . "his ways are best left unprofaned" . . . "God of the Desert" . . . that empty countenance. Stugatche swore and lumbered on, a tiny ant amid mountains of undulating sand.

## 5

SUDDENLY IT WAS daylight. The sand faded from purple to violet, then suffused with an orchid glow. But Stugatche did not see it, for he slept. Long before he had planned, his bloated body had given way beneath the strain, and the coming of dawn found him utterly weary and exhausted. His tired legs buckled under him and he collapsed upon the sand, barely managing to draw the blanket over him before he slept.

The sun crept across the prazen sky like a fiery ball of lava, pouring its molten rays upon the flaming sands. Stugatche

slept on, but his sleep was far from pleasant. The heat brought him queer and disturbing dreams.

In them he seemed to see the figure of Nyarlathotep pursuing him on a nightmare flight across the desert of fire. He was running over a burning plain, unable to stop, while searing pain ate into his charred and blackened feet. Behind him strode the Faceless God, urging him onward with a staff of serpents. He ran on and on; but always that presence kept pace behind him. His feet became numbed by the scorching agony of the sand. Soon he was hobbling on ghastly, crumpled stumps, but despite the torture he dared not stop. The Thing behind him cackled in diabolical mirth, his gigantic laughter rising to the blazing sky.

Stugatche was on his knees now, his crippled legs eaten away into ashy stumps that smoldered acridly even as he crawled. Suddenly the desert became a lake of living flame into which he sank, his scorched body consumed by a blast of livid, unendurable torment. He felt the sand lick pitilessly at his arms, his waist, his very throat; and still his dying senses were filled with a monstrous dread of the Faceless One behind him — a dread transcending all pain. Even as he sank into that white-hot inferno he

was feebly struggling on. The vengeance of the god must never overtake him! The heat was overpowering him now; it was frying his cracked and bleeding lips, transforming his scorched body into one ember of burning anguish.

He raised his head for the last time before his boiling brain gave way beneath the agony. There stood the Dark One, and even as Stugatche watched he saw the lean, taloned hands reach out to touch his fiery face; saw the dreadful triple-crowned head draw near to him, so that he gazed for one grisly moment into that empty countenance. As he looked he seemed to see something in that black pit of horror — something that was staring at him from illimitable gulfs beyond — something with great flaming eyes bored into his being with a fury greater than the fires that were consuming him. It told him, wordlessly, that his doom was sealed. Then came a burst of white-hot oblivion, and he sank into the seething sands, the blood bubbling in his veins. But the indescribable horror of that glimpse remained, and the last thing he remembered was the sight of that dreadful empty countenance and the nameless fear behind it. Then he awoke.

FOR A MOMENT his relief was so great that he did not

notice the sting of the midday sun. Then, bathed in perspiration, he staggered to his feet and felt the stabbing rays bite into his back. He tried to shield his eyes and glance above to get his bearings, but the sky was a bowl of fire. Desperately, he dropped the blanket and began to run. The sand was clinging to his feet, slowing his pace and tripping him. It burned his heels. He felt an intolerable thirst. Already the demons of delirium danced madly in his head. He ran, endlessly, and his dream seemed to become a menacing reality. Was it coming true?

His legs *were* scorched, his body *was* seared. He glanced behind. Thank God there was no figure there — yet! Perhaps, if he kept a grip on himself, he might still make it, in spite of the time he had lost. He raced on. Perhaps a passing caravan — but no, it was far out of the caravan route. Tonight the sunset would give him an accurate course. Tonight.

Damn the heat! Sand all around him. Hills of it, mountains. All alike they were, like crumbled, cyclopean ruins of titan cities. All were burning, smoldering in the fierce heat.

The day was endless. Time, ever an illusion, lost all meaning. Stugatche's weary body throbbed in bitter anguish, filling each moment with a new

and deeper torment. The horizon never changed. No mirage marred the cruel, eternal vista; no shadow gave surcease from the savage glare.

But wait! Was there not a shadow *behind* him? Something dark and shapeless, gloated at the back of his brain. A terrible thought pierced him with sudden realization. Nyarlathotep, God of the Desert! A shadow following him, driving him to destruction. Those legends — the natives warned him, his dreams warned him, even that dying creature on the rack. The Mighty Messenger always claims his own . . . a black man with a staff of serpents . . . "He cometh from out the desert, across the burning sands, and stalketh his prey throughout the land of his domain."

Hallucination? Dared he glance back? He turned his fever-addled head. Yes! *It was true, this time!* There *was* something behind him, far away on the slope below; something black and nebulous that seemed to pad on stealthy feet. With a muttered curse, Stugatche began to run. Why had he ever touched that image? If he got out of this he would never return to the accursed spot again. The legends were true. God of the Desert!

He ran on, even though the sun showered bloody kisses on his brow. He was beginning to

go blind. There were dazzling constellations whirling before his eyes, and his heart throbbed a shrieking rhythm in his breast. But in his mind there was room for but one thought — escape.

His imagination began playing him strange tricks. He seemed to see statues in the sand — statues like the one he had profaned. Their shapes towered everywhere, writhing giant-like out of the ground and confronting his path with eery menace. Some were in attitudes with wings outspread, others were tentacled and snake-like, but all were faceless and triple-crowned. He felt that he was going mad, until he glanced back and saw that creeping figure now only a half-mile behind. Then he staggered on, screaming incoherently at the grotesque eidolons barring his way. The desert seemed to take on a hideous personality, as though all nature were conspiring to conquer him. The contorted outlines of the sand became imbued with malignant consciousness; the very sun took on an evil life. Stugatche moaned deliriously. Would night ever come?

IT CAME AT IAST but by that time Stugatche did not know it. He was a shambling, raving thing, wandering over the shifting sand, and the rising

moon looked down on a thing that alternately howled and laughed. Presently the figure struggled to its feet and glanced furtively over its shoulder at a shadow that crept close. Then it began to run again, shrieking over and over again the single word, "Nyarlathotep." And all the while the shadow lurked just a step behind.

It seemed to be embodied with a strange and fiendish intelligence, for the shapeless adumbration carefully drove its victim forward in one definite direction, as if purposefully herding it toward an intended goal. The stars now looked upon a sight spawned of delirium — a man, chased across endlessly looming sands by a black shadow. Presently the pursued one came to the top of a hill and halted with a scream. The shadow paused in midair and seemed to wait.

Stugatche was looking down at the remains of his own camp, just as he had left it, the night before, with the sudden awful realization that he had been driven in a circle back to his starting-point. Then, with the knowledge, came a merciful mental collapse. He threw himself forward in one final effort to elude the shadow, and raced straight for the two stones where the statue was buried.

Then occurred that which he had feared. For even as he ran,

the ground before him quaked in the throes of a gigantic upheaval. The sand rolled in vast, engulfing waves away from the base of the two boulders. Through the opening rose the idol glistening evilly in the moonlight. And the oncoming sand from its base caught Stugatche as he ran toward it, sucking at his legs like a quicksand, and yawning at his waist. At the same instant the peculiar shadow rose and leapt forward. It seemed to merge with the statue in midair, a nebulous, animate mist. Then Stugatche, floundering in the grip of the sand, went quite insane with terror.

The formless statue gleamed living in the livid light, and the doomed man stared straight into its unearthly countenance. It was his dream come true, for behind that mask of stone he saw a face with eyes of yellow madness, and in those eyes he read death. The black figure spread its wings against the

hills, and sank into the sand with a thunderous crash.

Thereafter nothing remained above the earth save a living head that twisted on the ground and struggled futilely to free its imprisoned body from the iron embrace of the encircling sand. Its imprecation turned to frantic cries for mercy, then sank to a sob in which echoed the single word, "Nyarlathep."

When morning came Stugatche was still alive, and the sun baked his brain into a hell of crimson agony. But not for long. The vultures winged across the desert plain and descended upon him, almost as if supernaturally summoned.

Somewhere, buried in the sands below, an ancient idol lay, and upon its featureless countenance there was the faintest hint of a monstrous, hidden smile. For even as Stugatche, the unbeliever, died, his mangled lips paid whispered homage to Nyarlathep, Lord of the Desert.

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# Master Nicholas

by Seabury Quinn

(author of *The Phantom Farmhouse*, *The Cloth of Madness*)

SEABURY GRANDIN QUINN (born 1889) is probably known to the widest number of lovers of bizarre fiction for his characters Drs. Jules de Grandin and Samuel Trowbridge. Before they first appeared in *The Horror on the Links* (WEIRD TALES, October 1925) however, Quinn already had an enviable reputation with the readers. He had first been seen in the October 1923 issue with *The Phantom Farmhouse* (MOH, January 1965) and the first of a series of articles under the heading, *Weird Crimes*, thus making a double debut, as it were.

Another series of articles, *Servants of Satan*, ran in WT in 1925, concluding a couple of issues before the emergence of de Grandin. This dealt with the Salem Witchcraft craze in New England; and colonial America was to be the locale of several of his tales. The weird elements in Quinn are rooted in occultism, magic, and legend (as well as reports of actual events, some of them well authenticated) rather than the sort of "cosmic" horror invented by Lovecraft. His treatment of them, however, is quite ingenious, particularly in the way de Grandin uses modern science and technology to deal with ancient evil. The present story will be new to most readers of MOH as this is its first appearance in a professional magazine; it was widely appreciated by readers of the amateur publication in which it appeared originally.

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THERE ARE certain ceremonial calls to be made each time I go to New York. No trip, of course, would be complete without Radio City and a tour of window-washing down Fifth Avenue, nor could I call it a successful jaunt if I neglected to imbibe at least one drink at the old bar in Irving Place whence William Sydney Porter, otherwise, O. Henry, viewed the sidewalks of Manhattan through an amiable alcoholic haze. But most of all I love to browse along Fourth Avenue from Eighth to Fourteenth Street,

*Where antique books are  
ranged on shelves  
As dark and dusty as them-  
selves,*

and where the trash and lumber of one man may become the prized treasure of another.

It was on my latest visit to Bagdad on the Hudson that I found what appeared to be an old ledger lying dust-strewn and unnoticed on the 3 for 25c stand before a little shop in Astor Place. It was bound in scuffing calfskin, fastened with a brass hasp-and-knob, and warped and spotted from exposure to the weather. I unclasped its fastening with care lest its worn back give way altogether and saw inscribed upon its flyleaf in fading logwood ink:

*Eliab Stande - Firm - & -  
Witneff - ye - Salvation  
Motherfole hyf jourmall.*

I was about to put the volume back when an entry dated 12h Sep. 1676 caught my eye. Three minutes later the "journal" and a dog-eared copy of *Elsie Dinsmore* were mine, together with a volume of the Rev. Silas Higginbotham's *Gems of Devotional Poetry* — all for twenty-five cents, plus one cent city sales tax.

He must have been a very little man, this Eliab of the big name, and probably a victim of what our forbears knew as the "white fever" and we call poliomyelitis, for several times he mentions his small stature and once or twice refers to his "wythered hande."

It was not until the latter part of 1676, however, that the diary begins recording a series of events which might have been the basis of narrative poems by Longfellow or Whittier. Stripped of antique orthography and the minute chronicle of doings and happenings to his neighbors, the "journal" of Eliab et cetera Mothersole recounts:

12h Aug. 1676 — This day came Captain Winterset and several of his company upon their way to Plymouth town with the head of King Philip of the Wampanoags who was run

to earth and kilt like any fox by Mount Hope in Providence Plantations. The Wampanoags, they say, are well-nigh wiped out and those who still survive are hunted through the woods like beasts *ferae naturae*. Yet in the moment of full gratefulness for our deliverance from the savages I am greatly troubled in my heart, for this day week I did see Mistress Patience Fell, the promised wife of my brother Abiel, in sprightly conversation with Master Oliver Outbourne, whose father rides out in a coach and four.

They made a goodly couple these two, he with his dark hair, clear dark skin, and laughing black eyes, she with a beauty scarcely of this world, tall, lovely, tender to regard. Ah, Mistress Patience, had I been tall and strongly made instead of having but a puny stature and a withered hand, I had not stood aside and let my brother claim thee. But as it is I worship thee at a distance and bide the time when thou shalt be my sister, sith more to me thou never canst be.

And who is he, this richling upstart who dares prate with thee while Brother Abiel is away at the wars? He is but a ninny, unskilled alike with sword or quill, fit only to stand in a stall and cry "What d'ye lack?" at passers-by at fair time.

Were it not for his father's gold I trow ye'd give him not a second look for all his pretty face.

Yet like calleth to like. The men love pretty women, the women dote on pretty men, and Abiel my brother though stalwart and most worthy hath little manly beauty. Besides, the years crowd on him, for his next birthday is his thirtieth, and youth and age are not fit mates for one another. If Brother Abiel comes not soon from the wars I fear he'll find his birdling in another's cage.

22 Dec. 1676 — In my breast resounds an aching void where once there was a heart, for it is bruited round that Mistress Patience Fell will marry Oliver Outbourne. O Abiel my brother, why dalliest thou in the wild-wood hunting feathered savages while the fox is in thy vineyard; why, O shallow-hearted woman, dost thou set thy plighted word at naught and take a nincompoop to husband?

23 May, 1677 — Today I bespoke Mistress Patience in the High Street. "How now, Mistress," I asked, "wilt thou truly set aside thy pledged word to my brother and intermarry with this ninny? 'Tis true Abiel is a trifle old and nothing handsome, but he hath one of the best shops in Duncanon, and loveth thee right well besides.

What hath this zany that my brother lacketh?"

Whereat she tossed her fair head saucily and looked me in the eye. "And what is it to thee whom I should marry, Master Eliab?" says she. "Master Outbourne hath much wealth, and she who weds him will go clad in silks and satins and have servants attend her. Besides that he is young and favorable."

"Peace, woman!" I rebuked. "Do baubles such as these outweigh true worth? Also thou hast given thy pledge to my brother."

Now, hearing this she laughed a laugh as musical as water-glasses played on by a cunning hand and tossed her head again. "Yea, such things far outweigh that which thou callest worth, good Master Eliab," saith she right pertly. "And as for my pledged word, a promise of betrothal is no marriage, and a woman hath the right to change her mind." With which she left me staring like a natural in the midst of High Street.

25 Jul. 1677 — This day came Brother Abiel from the wars, looking mighty fine and soldier-like in his bright body armor and steel cap, his boots of Spanish leather and his great sword clanking at his heels. First of all he goeth to the

shop to see how Goodman Dillet and the 'prentices had managed in his absence, then to my chambers for a snack of cold roast mutton and a stoup of small beer. "And how fares it with 'my 'beauteous bride-to-be?" he asketh with his eyes above the tankard's rim and beer-foam on his mouth. "Doth she comport herself as one should who will wed the keeper of the finest shop in all the town?"

It was not till he had drank three more pint-cups of the brew that I made bold to tell him how things stood, and at the hearing he went livid as a dead corpse hanged on Gallows Hill. "And thou hast suffered this?" he bellowed in so wild a tone that I was fain to creep beneath my table for safety. "By Lucifer his horns, I have a mind to spit thee like a fowl on this sword of mine! As for that coxcombb Oliver, may Satan broil me on a grid if I do not cut out his heart and feed it to that jill-flirt woman bit by tiny bit . . ."

"Would not that be a silly thing to do, friend?" asked a soft, insinuating voice, and at its sound we both turned toward my outer chamber door, which had been left a little open because of the heat.

The one who stood upon my threshold was the strangest figure ever I did see. He was a

small man, scarcely higher than I, but something in his mein made him seem big, almost a giant. His skin was tanned a copper hue by the sun and wind, belike by the sea as well, for there was that about him that bespoke the sea, and though his eyes were smiling, cruelty lurked in their depths. A small black mustache edged his upper lip, and on his chin was a tuft of whisker narrow as a woman's finger. For the rest he wore his hair at shoulder length and had a fine green coat frogged with gold lace, a ruffled shirt of fine linen with falls of lace at throat and wrists, and claret-colored breeches tucked in boots of Moorish leather. Across one shoulder swung a baldric of red silk and from it hung a jewel-hilted rapier.

"I ask your pardons," he said as he doffed his wide hat with a flourish, "but I was passing by and heard some talk of murder, and as I have much interest in such things and am vastly curious by nature, I made bold to stop and — may I come in?" He smiled most pleasantly at me.

"Aye, man, come in; stand not there grinning like a cat before a dish o' cream!" bade Brother Abiel, but still the stranger lingered on my doorstep.

"These be your chambers, ben't they, sir?" he asketh me.

"Methought I saw your lawyer's shingle at the door."

"Yea, they are mine," I answered. "Pray enter."

"I thank thee in all courtesy," he said, stepping across the sill. "One in my position cannot be too careful in such matters."

"And who in Satan's foul name art thou, and what concern is it of thine if I should choose to slit a jackanape's gullet?" asketh Brother Abiel.

"Oh none at all." The stranger laughed a laugh that somehow sounded like the sighing of the wind among the pines in winter. "If you elect to dangle from a noose on Gallows Hill, and so lose life and love at once, 'tis no concern of mine." He took a jeweled snuff-box from his pocket and pinched a mite of maccaboy 'twist thumb and finger, then put it to his nose most daintily. "I'd offer you a sniff," he telleth Brother Abiel, "but I fear 'twould prove a little over-warm for thee." And verily the stuff seemed fiery, for as he sniffed it up his nostrils I could swear I saw a little flash of flame come from them, and in a moment came a little puff of smoke, as though he drew on a tobacco pipe.

"A pox on thee and thy rappee!" sware Brother Abiel. "Get thee gone and leave us to our discourse, sirrah!"

"And if I do not choose to leave?" the stranger asked with

such a smile as one might give a nidding child.

"Why, then, I'll take the flat o' my blade off thy hindsides!" bellowed Brother Abiel, and half drew his great sword from its sheath.

But swift as he was to unloose his steel the stranger was still handier, and whipped his rapier out as it had been a flash of lightning darting from a cloud. "Put up thy blade, great dotterel," he bade as he pressed home his spadron's tip agaunst my brother's throat.

"Fore heaven," sware Abiel as he clanged his blade back in its tube, "I think the devil's in thy hand."

"That may well be," the other agreed with a light tittering laugh, "and in the rest o' me as well. But we were talking of another matter. Meseems that thou wouldst wed the lady?"

"I would in very truth," my brother answereth. "There is nothing in the world that I desire so much."

The stranger drummed against his lips with the fingers of one hand. "And what price wouldst thou pay for her?"

Abiel raised his knotted fists and tossed his head back as in prayer. "As heaven and hell shall judge me," he cried wildly, "I'd give the soul out of my body to wed her!"

"Why sure, that is a reasonable enough price." The strang-

er smiled like one who comes upon a bargain at a tradesman's. "Thou wouldst not quibble over payment?"

My brother thrust his face forward until his knotty nose almost met the other's lean back. "If Satan would but grant my wedding to this woman he might take my soul and be welcome!" he snarled like a teased dog.

The stranger laughed again and made a leg to each of us in turn. "I am known as Master Nicholas by some," he told us, "and I will see thee at thy wedding to fair Mistress Patience Fell, brave Captain Abiel." With which he turned upon his heel and left us gawking as we had seen a peacock, ape, or other marvel, for neither of us had pronounced my brother's name nor that of Mistress Patience in his hearing, yet he had called them by their proper styles. Moreover, he was as solid as a fence-post when he stepped across my threshold, yet in the twinkling on an eye he disappeared as he walked through the door, and where a man had stood was nothing but the dapple of the sunshine on the doorstep and two or three blue-bottles buzzing in the heat.

3d Aug. 1677 — Woe me, for I have slain a man. The brand of Cain is on my brow, and though the crowner's quest acquits me of the murther, my



conscience troubleth me greatly.

It was about two of the clock when I was on my way to Goodwife Mathhew's for a cast of bread that evil fortune threw young Master Oliver Outbourne in my path. As Holy Scripture saith, wine is a mocker and strong drink rageth, and Oliver had taken something more than small beer with his dinner, for his face was flushed and his eyes glowing when he met me in High Street. "Good morrow, Master Pettifogger," quoth he. "I've heard thou likest not the idea of my wedding to sweet Patience, and sayest I'm no better than a fox in the vineyard; that thou wilt pummel me on sight, and other suchlike things."

"Why, then, 'tis partly truth and partly lies they've told thee," I answered. "That thou or any man should seduce Mistress Patience from her promise to my brother seems little less than scandalous to me, but he who says I uttered threats against thee lies. I am a lawyer and a man of peace. Besides, thou art of heavier frame than I, and mauger my desire I am powerless to do thee hurt." Where-with I made to pass him.

But he would not have it so. "Thou art a misbegotten liar and a craven coward to boot," he told me as he stood himself in my way. "Thy great oaf of a brother I cannot trounce, but

thee I can and will, and may the devil take me by the hand and bid me welcome to his house if I do not do it here and now." Whereat he drew his sword and struck me smartly on the cheek with its flat.

Now during these days of alarm I wear my cutlass at my thigh, for Providence alone knoweth what moment we shall have to fight for life against savages, so when I felt the sting of steel upon my cheek I drew my blade and stood at guard, and seeing this mine adversary laughed in triumph and made at me.

But as he beat my brand aside and aimed a thrust at my bosom he stumbled in the road so that he fell against my awkwardly advanced point and was thrust through the throat.

His sword fell to the dust and up his empty hands went to the sky, his fingers clutching at the air. He made a gurgling in his throat like water flowing through a covered runnel, then the stiffness went from his legs and he fell flat in the road while blood gushed from his mouth in a red spate. Then he was dead.

Perhaps it had gone hard with me at the crowner's quest had it not been that Mistress Patience was upon her way to Goodwife Jenkins' for a loan of leaven for her baking, and chanced to witness our encount-

er. Our words she had not heard, but she saw Oliver take out his sword and smite me in the face therewith, and on her testimony that I had not bared my blade until I was attacked I was acquitted of a charge of murder.

As I left the inquisition Mistress Patience looked on me with such a look as I had never seen in a woman's eyes before, and, "Eliab," saith she, what time her cheek and throat were stained a wild rose color with the mounting blood, "I had not thought thou had it in thee." Then she was gone.

Now one thing greatly troubles me, nay, two. *Imprimiss* Meseems that Oliver did not entirely fall upon my point by chance, for in the instant that he stumbled in the road it was as if there were three shadows in the bright sunshine, mine own, Oliver's, and another's, and that other stood at his shoulder as if to push him from the back and make him lose his balance and fall upon my steel. Yet there were only two of us there present, of that I can avouch. *Secunduss* As Oliver ceased struggling and lay quiet in the High Street I thought I caught the shadow of two forms at some small distance, and the first of these was shaped like Oliver Outbourne who lay dead in the dust before me, while with him, drawing him along

as one might lead a balky child, meseemed I saw the shade of Master Nicholas.

*29th Sep. 1677*—Today a little before sundown went my brother Abiel and I to meet with Mistress Patience and her mother, Dame Deborah, at the manse. And presently their vows were made and Parson Kawswell lectured them at length, bidding Patience be submissive to her wedded lord and master, and Abiel to love and cherish her as the weaker vessel. And afterwards we went out into the cool of the evening.

"Come, wife," commanded Brother Abiel. "My house is swept and garnished for thee, and I have waited long to bear thee over its threshold."

"Nay, be not so impatient, Son Abiel," chid Dame Deborah gently. "Thy bed and board will keep a little longer, and I have made brave preparations for a feast. The beer is brewed, the cider mulled, the pigs and turkeys roasting on their spits, and soon the neighbors gather to break bread with us."

"Then let them break their bread without our company," saith Brother Abiel. "This woman is my wedded wife, vowed to obey me. It is my will and pleasure that she come with me forthwith."

"Nay, Brother — Sister Patience is no prisoner," I remon-

strated, but he put my hand off roughly.

"She is vowed to serve and obey me," he answered, "and while I live I'll hold her to her vows . . ."

"I fear that will not be too long, brave Captain Abiel," spake a soft voice from the whispering lilac bushes growing by the way, and forth stepped Master Nicholas. "We have a little business to attend to, thou and I. The trifling matter of thy soul — remember?"

Now at these words my brother went haggard as a corpse, but he put a brave face upon the matter. "Who art thou?" he demanded roughly as he could albeit his voice was small and still as that of conscience.

A light laugh, tittering as a woman's, came from Master Nicholas, but there was neither mirth nor laughter in his eyes. "And dost thou truly not know me?" he demanded. His voice increased until it was a mighty shout like storm-wind raging through the stricken forest, and suddenly his stature seemed to grow until he towered taller than the tallest maple rustling its red leaves beside the road. "To some I'm known as Master Nicholas, some call me Old Nick, but there are others who know me by names more dreadful: Apollyon, Belial, Asmodeus, Abaddon, Ized . . ." Then all at once he shrunk to human size

again and stood there laughing at us like a conjurer who grins at yokels he has mystified with his tricks. "Come, Captain Abiel, thy place is readied for thee alongside Master Outbourne, and I grow weary waiting. I have other business to transact this night."

Now I was sorely tempted to keep silence, for it had come to me that, brother or no brother, Abiel was no fit mate for the gentle Patience; that he would make her life one long misery, and so I hated him with a sinful hatred. But the blood of our forbears flowed in his veins as well as mine, and so, although my knees were quaking and my voice no stronger than the squeaking of a mouse, I spake up.

"Now soothly, Master Nicholas, methinks that thou hast done less than justice by my brother. I grant you he did say he's give his soul to live in wedlock with Mistress Patience, but . . ."

"Nay, Master Eliab," Old Nick brake in, "thou hast the wrong of it. He promised me the soul from his body in return for *wedding* her, and he hath wed her with both book and ring to-night. I did not promise him connubial joys, nor did he bargain for them."

Now when he spake thus it seemed that Old Nick had me upon the hip, but suddenly I

bethought me. "Thou wouldst not have thy contract aught but legal, Master Nicholas?"

"Nay, marry, I who am the very prince of lawyers am a stickler for the letter of the law in all things."

"Why, then, thou'd wish to have thy agreement conformable to th *lex loci contractus* — the law of the land wherein it was made?"

"Indeed!"

"What value wouldst thou set upon the soul of a New Englander, a man who knoweth the Scripture like the lines of his own hand, who is never absent from divine worship unless on business for the Commonwealth, who swears not overmuch and drinketh but little more than is good for him?"

"Why, ten pound sterling; mayhap, ten pound two and six."

"Precisely, Master Nicholas, and wot ye not the statute of our sovereign Lord King Charles — the one passed in the twenty-ninth year of his reign to outlaw frauds and perjuries?"

Old Nick took chin in hand and thought a moment. "Old Rowley I know, truly. I've had mine eye on him this many a year, but of his statute I know naught. What are its terms, Aliab?"

Then I rehearsed the law for him by rote:

"*No contract for the*

*sale of goods, wares, or merchandise for the price of ten pounds sterling or upwards shall be allowed to be good, except the buyer shall accept part of the goods so sold and actually receive the same, or give something in earnest to bind the bargain or in part payment, or that some note or memorandum of the said bargain be made and signed by the parties to be charged by such contract or their agents thereunto lawfully authorized.\**

"Now tell me, Master Nicholas," I pressed, "didst thou pay anything, even so little as one pine-tree shilling, in earnest to my brother?"

"Nay," answered he.

"Or didst thou receive and accept the smallest tittle of the merchandise thou bought?"

"In truth, I did not," saith Old Nick.

"And, finally, hast thou a written note or memorandum of the contract, signed by my brother or his agent?"

"I have not," he saith.

"Why, certes, then, we cannot hold thy contract to be good, nor hast thou any legal claim. Unhand my brother and be off about the business thou

\*1. Stat. 29 Car. II., Ch. 3, Sec. 17, (1676).

has spoken of. *Retro Satanas! Abire ad tuum locum!* Thy contract hath no more law than a monkey hath a waistcoat."

Now as I spake Old Nick's swart face grew almost merry and his black eyes twinkled gleefully. "By all the names that men have called me, Eliab, meseems that thou hast had me for a gull!" he chuckled. "Still, as the saying is in these parts, 'tis better to be shaved by a sharp razor than scraped with a dull one, and I bear thee no ill will. Upon mine honor — which is greater than some will admit — I do not. Go thy ways and take the fee thy clever pleading hath earned thee. 'Twill not be long forthcoming, I promise."

But when he turned on Brother Abiel his countenance had lost its merriment. His face had grown hateful, aged, sly. "They do not prosper who make bargains with Old Nick and seek to 'scape them, Captain Abiel," quoth he. "'Tis to the fine edge of thy brother's wit, not thine own merit, thou owest freedom. Eftsoons we'll meet again, and thou'lt not have thy clever brother Eliab for advocate." Then suddenly the sun dropped down behind the western hills like a shot bird and it was dark. Old Nick was nowhere to be seen.

"Alack, Son Abiel," quoth Dame Deborah, "why stand ye

gawking into nothingness, thou and Eliab? Come thy ways; the roasting meats will be burnt to a coal."

My brother drew his sleeve down his sweating brow. "He said . . ." he faltered like a babe that cannot form its words aright . . . "that we should meet again . . ."

"Alackaday, what talk is this?" crieth Dame Deborah. "Who is it that said what? For more time than a body would take to count fifty thou and Eliab have stood there staring into nothing, like silly birds charmed by a grimalkin!"

At that my brother Abiel laughed witlessly and put his hand out for his newly married bried, but in that instant the long roll of the drum came from the common, and we heard the rallying-cry of the trained band: "To your tents, O Israel, the savages be risen again!"

30h Oct. 1677 — Yestereven came Ezekiel Stevens from the backwoods, ghastly with loss of blood and sore afflicted with a score of wounds. He had but strength to pant his story forth before he fell into a swoond from which he hath not yet awakened, mauger all efforts of the leeches.

He is the sole survivor of my brother's company of six who were ambushed by the Merri-mack and perished fighting

gallantly. He saw my brother fall pierced by an arrow through the throat, and saw a red-skinned savage beat his brains out, then rip the reeking scalp from his skull. Moreover, he swore that in the instant of my brother's passing he spied a foreign-seeming man in a green coat and red breeches hovering in the underbrush. Some say it is but an hallucination of battle, others fear that the Frenchers incite the savages to war, but I recall the parting words of Master Nicholas when he took leave of Brother Abiel and me. Alas, my brother . . .

When all was told I hied me to Abiel's mansion to offer sympathy and help to Sister Patience. I thought she never would have done weeping when I imparted the drear tidings, and finally made bold to lay a hand in comfort on her shoulder, whereat she shook my fingers off and looked at me with eyes so bright their brightness fairly burnt the tears away.

"Canst thou not see I weep for joy?" she asked at length.

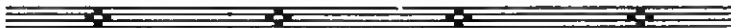
"I who was a captive am at last a free woman — mine own woman. Nor husband nor parent shall now stand between me and that I most desire."

"And what dost thou desire, Sister?" asked I marvelling.

The rosy color dyed her face, but her bright eyes were steady as she answered, "What but thyself, O over-bashful Eliab? What but thyself, whom I have loved since we were in dame school together?"

Now when I heard these words from her I'd worshipped secretly since childhood the breath came hot and fervid in my throat and all the strength went from my legs so that I kneeled before her and hid my face in her robe and stayed thus without speaking for a long while.

And presently she laid a hand upon my head and spake gently, yet with a sweet impatience, "Nay, Eliab, kneel not to me; I am no heathen goddess. Stand on thy feet and clip me in thine arms. October nights grow chill, and I have but cold comfort lying by my lone in yon great bed."





# But Not the Herald

by Roger Zelzany

Roger Zelzany is a fairly recent comer to the field of fantasy fiction, with several memorable appearances in FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION, most notable, *A Rose for Ecclesiastes*.

AS THE OLD man came down from the mountain, carrying the box, walking along the trail that led to the sea, he stopped, to lean upon his staff, to watch the group of men who were busy burning their neighbor's home.

"Tell me, man," he asked one of them, "why do you burn your neighbor's home, which, I now note from the barking and the screaming, still contains your neighbor, as well as his dog, wife, and children?"

"Why should we not burn it?" asked the man. "He is a

foreigner from across the desert, and he looks different from the rest of us. This also applies to his dog, who looks different from our dogs and barks with a foreign accent, and his wife, who is prettier than our wives and speaks with a foreign accent, and his children, who are cleverer than ours and speak like their parents."

"I see," said the old man, and he continued on his way.

At the crossroads, he came upon a crippled beggar whose crutches had been thrown high

into a tree. He struck upon the tree with his staff and the crutches fell to the ground. He restored them to the beggar.

"Tell me how your crutches came to be in the treetop, brother," he said.

"The boys threw them there," said the beggar, adjusting himself and holding out his hand for alms.

"Why did they do that?"

"They were bored. They tired their parents with asking, 'What should I do now?' until finally one or another of the parents suggested they go make sport of the beggar at the crossroads."

"Such games be somewhat unkind," said the old man.

"True," said the beggar, "but fortunately some of the older boys found them a girl and they are off in the field enjoying her now. You can hear her cries if you listen carefully. They are somewhat weak at the moment, of course. Would I were young and whole again, that I might join in the sport!"

"I see," said the old man, and he turned to go.

"Alms! Alms! Have you no alms in that box you bear? Have you nothing to bestow upon a poor, lame beggar?"

"You may have my blessing," said the old man, "but this box contains no alms."

"A fig for thy blessing, old goat! One cannot eat a bless-

ing! Give me money or food!"

"Alas, I have none to give."

"Then my curses be upon your head! May all manner of misfortune come down on you!"

THE OLD MAN continued on his way to the sea, coming after a time upon two men who were digging a grave for a third who lay dead.

"It is a holy office to bury the dead," he remarked.

"Aye," said one of the men, "especially if you have slain him yourself and are hiding the evidence."

"You have slain that man? Whatever for?"

"Next to nothing, curse the luck! Why should a man fight as he did over the smallest of coins? His purse was near empty."

"From his garments, I should judge he was a poor man."

"Aye, and now he has naught more to trouble him."

"What have you in that box, old man?" asked the second.

"Nothing of any use. I go to cast it in the sea."

"Let's have a look."

"You may not."

"We'll be judge of that."

"This box is not to be opened."

They approached him. "Give it to us."

"No."

The second one struck the old man in the head with a

stone; the first snatched the box away from him. "There! Now let us see what it is that is so useless."

"I warn you," said the old man, rising from the ground, "if you open that box you do a terrible thing which may never be undone."

"We'll be judge of that."

They cut at the cords which bound the lid.

"If you will wait but a moment," said the old man, "I will tell you of that box."

They hesitated. "Very well, tell us."

"It was the box of Pandora. She who opened it unleashed upon the world all of the terrible woes which afflict it."

"Ha! A likely tale!"

"It is said by the gods, who charged me cast it into the sea, that the final curse waiting within the box is worse than all the other ills together."

"Ha!"

They undid the cord and threw back the lid.

A golden radiance sped forth. It rose into the air like a fountain, and from within it a winged creature cried out, in a voice infinitely delicate and pathetic, "Free! After all these ages, to be free at last!"

The men fell upon their faces. "Who are you, oh lovely creature," they asked, "you who move us to such strange feelings?"

"I am called Hope," said the creature. "I go to travel in all the dark places of the Earth, where I will inspire men with the feeling that things may yet be better than they are."

And with that it rose into the air and dashed off in search of the dark places of the Earth.

When the two murderers turned them again to the old man, he was changed: for now his beard was gone, and he stood before them a powerful youth. Two serpents were coiled about his staff.

"Even the gods could not prevent it," he said. "You have brought this ill upon yourselves, by your own doing. Remember that, when bright Hope turns to dust in your hands."

"Nay," said they, "for another traveler approaches now, and he wears a mighty purse upon him. We shall retire on this day's takings."

"Fools!" said the youth, and he turned on winged heels and vanished up the path, greeting Hercules as he passed him by.



# Dr. Muncing, Exorcist

by Gordon MacCreagh

Gordon MacCreagh was an adventure story writer for the pulps during the 30's and thereafter, and shares with Robert E. Howard the distinction of having a story announced coming in the 8th issue of *STRANGE TALES* — an issue which never appeared. (Elsewhere in this issue you will find something about the Howard story.) This announced tale, *The Case of the Crusader's Hand*, was the third Dr. Muncing adventure.

There is reason to suspect that MacCreagh rewrote the story later, eliminating Dr. Muncing, for his novelet, *The Hand of St. Ury* (*WEIRD TALES*, January 1951) certainly fits both the title announced in *STRANGE TALES* and the general tenor of the two Dr. Muncing stories (the second entitled, *The Case of the Sinister Shape*) which did appear.

THE BRASS PLATE upon the gate post of the trim white wicket said only: *Dr. Muncing, Exorcist*.

Aside from that, the house was just the same as all the others in that street — semi-detached, stuccoed, respectable. A few more brass plates announced other sober citizens with

their sprinkling of doctors of medicine and one of divinity. But Dr. Muncing, Exorcist; that was suggestive of something queer.

The man who gazed reflectively out of the window at the driving rain, that day in 193—, was, like his brass sign, vaguely suggestive, too, of

something queer; of having the capacity to do something that the other sober citizens, doctors and lawyers, did not do.

He was of a little more than middle height, broad, with strong, capable-looking hands; his face was square cut, finely criss-crossed with weatherbeaten lines, tanned from much travel in far-away lands; a strong nose hung over a thin, wide mouth that closed with an extraordinary determination.

The face of a normal man of strong character. It was the eyes that conveyed that vague impression of something unusual. Deep set, they were, of an indeterminate color, hidden beneath a frown of reflective brows; brooding eyes, suggestive of a knowledge of things that other sober citizens did not know.

The other man who stared out of the other window was younger, bigger in every way; an immense young fellow who carried in his big shoulders and clean complexion every mark of having devoted more of his college years to study of football rather than of medicine. This one grunted an ejaculation.

"I'll bet a dollar this is a patient for you."

Dr. Muncing came over to the other window. "I don't bet dollars with Dr. James Terry. Gambling seems to have been one of the few things you did

really well at Johns College. The fellow does look plentifully frightened, at that."

The man in question was hurrying down the street, looking anxiously at the house numbers; bent over, huddled in a raincoat, he read the numbers furtively, as though reluctant to turn his head out of the protection of his up-turned collar. He uttered a glad cry as he saw the plate of Dr. Muncing, Exorcist, and, letting the gate slam, he stumbled up the path to the door.

Dr. Muncing met the man personally, led him to a comfortable chair, mixed a stimulant for him, offered him a cigarette. Calm, methodical, matter-of-fact, this was his "bed-side manner" with such cases. Forcefully he compelled the impression that, whatever might be the trouble, it was nothing that could not be cured. He stood waiting for an explanation. The man stammered an incoherent jumble of nothings.

"I - Doctor, I don't know how - I can't tell you what it is, but the Reverend Mr. Hendryx sent me to you. Yet I don't know what to tell you; there's nothing to describe."

"Well," said the doctor judicially, "that is already interesting. If there's nothing and if the Reverend Mr. Hendryx feels that he can't pray it away,

we probably have something that we can get hold of."

His manner was dominant and cheerful, he radiated confidence. His bulky young assistant had been chosen for just that purpose also, to assist in putting over the impression of power, of force to deal with queer and horrible things that could not be sanely described.

The man began to respond to that atmosphere. He got a grip on himself and began to speak more coherently.

"Doctor, I don't know what to tell you. There have been no — spooks, or anything of that sort. We've seen nothing; heard nothing. It's only a feeling. I — you'll laugh at me, Doctor, but — it's just a something in the dark that brings a feeling of awful fear; and I know that it will catch me. Last night — my God, last night it almost touched me."

"I never laugh," said Dr. Muncing seriously, "until I have laid my ghost. For some ghosts are horribly real. Tell me something about yourself, your family, your home and so on. And as to your fears, whatever they are, please don't try to conceal them from me."

A BAFFLED expression came over the man's face. "There's nothing to tell, Doctor; nothing that's different to anybody else. I don't know what could bring

this frightful thing about us. I — my name is Jarrett — I sell real estate up in the Catskills. I have a little place a hundred feet off the paved state road, two miles from the village. There's nothing old or dilapidated about the house; there's modern plumbing, electric lights, and so on. No old graveyards anywhere in the neighborhood. Not a single thing to bring this horror; and yet — I tell you, Doctor, there's something frightful in the dark that we can feel."

"Hm-m!" The doctor pursed his lips and walked a short beat, his hands deep in his pockets. "A new house; no old associations. Begins to sound like an elemental, only how would such a thing have gotten loose? Or it might be a malignant geoplasm, but — Tell me about your family, Mr. Jarrett."

"There's only four of us, Doctor. There's my wife's brother, who's an invalid; and . . ."

"Ah-h!" A quick breath came from the doctor. "So there's a sick man, yes? What is his trouble?"

"His lungs are affected. He was advised to come to us for the mountain air; and he was getting very much better; but recently he's very much worse again. We've been thinking that perhaps this constant terror has been too much for him."

"Hm-m, yes, indeed." The doctor strode his quick beat back

and forth; his indeterminate eyes were distinctly steel gray just now. "Yes, yes, the terror, and the sick man who grows worse. Quite so. Who else, Mr. Jarrett? What else have you that might attract a visophaging entity?"

"A viso-what? Good God, Doctor, we haven't anything to attract anything. Besides my wife's brother there's only my son, ten years of age, and my wife. She gets it worse than any of us; she says she has even seen—but I think there's a lot of blarney in all that." The man contrived a sick smile. "You know how women are, Doctor; she says she has seen shapes—formless things in the dark. She likes to think she is psychic, and she is always seeing things that nobody else knows anything about."

"Oh, good Lord!" Dr. Muncing groaned and his face was serious. "Verily do fools rush in. All the requirements for piercing the veil. Heavens, what idiots people can be."

Suddenly he shot an accusing finger at Mr. Jarrett. "I suppose she makes you sit round a table with her, and all that sort of stuff."

"Yes, Doctor, she does. Raps and spelt out messages, and so on."

"Good Lord!" The doctor walked angrily back and forth. "Fools by the silly thousand play

with this kind of fire, and this time these poor simpletons have broken in on something."

He whirled on the frightened realtor with accusing finger laying down the law.

"Mr. Jarrett, your foolish wife doesn't know what she has done. I myself don't know what she has turned loose or what this thing might develop into. We may be able to stop it. It may escape and grow into a world menace. I tell you we humans don't begin to know what forces exist on the other side of that thin dividing line that we don't begin to understand. The only thing to do now is to come with you immediately to your home; and we must try and find out what this thing is that has broken through and whether we can stop it."

THE JARRETT HOUSE turned out exactly as described. Modern and commonplace in every way; situated in an acre of garden and shrubbery on a sunlit slope of the Catskill Mountains. The other houses of the straggly little village were much the same, quiet residences of normal people who preferred to retire a little beyond the noise and activity of the summer resort of Pine Bend about two miles down the state road.

The Jarrett family fitted exactly into their locale. Well meaning, hospitable rural non-

entities. The lady who was psychic was over-plump and short of breath at that elevation; the son, a gangling schoolboy, evinced the shy aloofness of country youth before strangers; the sick man, thin and drawn, with an irritable cough, showed the unnatural flush of color on his cheeks that marked his disease.

It required very much less than Dr. Muncing's keenness to see that all of these people were in a condition of nervous tension that in itself was proof of something that had made quite an extraordinary effect on their unimaginative minds.

Dilated eyes, tremulous limbs, backward looks; all these things showed that something had brought this unfortunate family to the verge of a panic that reached the very limits of their control.

The doctor was an adept at dispelling that sort of jumpiness. Such a mental condition was the worst possible for combating "influences," whatever they might be. He acknowledged his introductions with easy confidence, and then he held up his hand.

"No, no, nix on that. Give me a chance to breathe. D'you want to ruin my appetite with horrors? Let's eat first and then you can spread yourselves out on the story. No ghost likes a full stomach."

He was purposely slangy. The immediate effect was that his hosts experienced a measure of relief. The man radiated such an impression of knowledge, of confidence, of power.

The meal, however, was at best a lugubrious one. Conversation had to be forced to dwell on ordinary subjects. The wife evinced a painful disinclination to go into the kitchen. "Our cook left us two days ago," she explained. The boy was silent and frightened. The sick man said little, and coughed a dry, petulant bark at intervals.

The doctor, engrossed in his plate, chattered gaily about nothing; but all the time he was watching the invalid like a hawk. James Terry did his best to distract attention from the expert's scrutiny of everybody and everything in the room. By the time the meal was over the doctor had formed his opinion about the various characteristics and idiosyncracies of his hosts, and he dominated the company with his expansive cheerfulness.

"Well, now, let's get one of those satisfying smokes in the jimmy pipe, and you can tell me all about it. You"—selecting the lady—"you tell me. I'm sure you'll give the best account."

The lady, flustered and frightened, was able to add very little to what her husband had already described. There was nothing to add. A baffling nothing-



ness enshrouded the whole situation; but it was a nothingness that was full of an unnamable fear—a feeling of terror enhanced by the “shapes” of the wife’s psychic imaginings. A nameless nothing to be combated.

The doctor shrugged with impatience. He had met with just such conditions before: the inability of people to describe their ghostly happenings with coherence. He decided on a bold experiment.

“My dear lady,” he said, devoting his attention to the psychic one, “it is difficult to exorcise a mere feeling until we know something about the cause of it. Now I’ll tell you what we ought to do. When you sit at your table for your little seances you get raps and so on, don’t you? And you spell out messages from your ‘spirit friends’, isn’t it? And you’d like to go into a trance and let your ‘guides’ control you; only you are a little nervous about it; and all that kind of stuff, no?”

“Why, yes, Doctor, that is just about what happens, but how should you know all that?”

“Hm,” grunted the doctor dryly. “You are not alone in your foolishness, my dear lady; there are many thousands in the United States who take similar chances. They look upon psychic exploration as a parlor game. But now what I want to

suggest is, let’s have one of your little seances now. And you will go into a trance this time and perhaps you—I mean your guides—will tell us something. In the trance condition, which after all is a form of hypnosis—though we do not know whether the state is auto-induced or whether it is due to the suggestion of an outside influence—in this hypnotic condition the subconscious reflexes are sensitive to influences that the more material conscious mind cannot receive.”

MRS. JARRETT’S plump hand fluttered to her breast. This was so sudden; and she had really been a little bit afraid of her seances since this terror came into the house. But the doctor was already arranging the little round table and the chairs.

Without looking round, he said, “You need not be at all nervous this time. And I want your brother particularly to stay in the room, though not necessarily at the table. Jimmy, you sit aside and steno whatever comes through, will you.” And in a quiet aside to his friend, he added, “Sit near the switch, and if I holler, throw on the lights instantly and see that the sick man gets a stimulant. I may be busy.”

Under the doctor’s experienced direction everything was

soon ready. Just the four sat at the table, the Jarrett family and the doctor. The sick brother sat tucked in an arm chair by the window and Jimmy Terry near the light switch at the door.

Once more the doctor cautioned the brawny Terry, "Watch this carefully, Jimmy. I'm putting the sick man's life into your hands. If you feel anything, if you sense anything, if you *think* anything near him, snap on the lights. Don't ask anything. Act. Ready? All right then, black out."

With the click of the switch the room was in darkness through which came only the petulant cough of the sick man. As the eyes accustomed themselves to the gloom there was sufficient glow from the moonlight outside to distinguish the dim outlines of figures.

"This is what you usually do, isn't it?" asked the doctor. "Hands on the table and little fingers touching?" And without waiting for the reply of which he seemed to be so sure, he continued, "All the usual stuff, I see. But now, Mrs. Jarrett, I'm going to lay my hands over yours and you will go into a trance. So. Quiet and easy now. Let yourself go."

In a surprisingly short space of time the table shivered with that peculiar inward tremor so familiar to all dabblers in the psychic. Shortly thereafter it

heaved slowly up and descended with a vast deliberation. There was a moment's stillness fraught with effort; then a rhythmic tap-tap-tap of one leg.

"Now," said the doctor authoritatively. "You will go into a trance, Mrs. Jarrett. Softly, easily. Let go. You're going into a trance. Going . . . going . . ." His voice was soothingly commanding.

Mrs. Jarrett moaned, her limbs jerked, she stretched as if in pain; then with a sigh she became inert.

"Watch out, Jimmy," the doctor warned in a low voice. Then to the woman: "Speak. Where are you? What do you see?"

The plump, limp bulk moaned again. The lips moved; inarticulate sounds proceeded from them, the fragments of unformed words; then a quivering sigh and silence. The doctor took occasion to lean first to one side and then to the other to listen to the breathing of Mr. Jarrett and the boy. Both were a little faster than normal; under the circumstances, not strange. With startling suddenness words cut the dark, clear and strong.

"I AM IN a place full of mist, I don't know where. Gray mist." A labored silence. Then: "I am at the edge of something; something deep, dark." A pause. "Before me is a curtain, dim and misty—no—it seems—I think—

no, it is the mist that is the curtain. There are dim things moving beyond the curtain."

"Ha!" An exclamation of satisfaction from the doctor.

"I can't make them out. They are not animals; not people. They are dark things. Just — shapes."

"Good God, that's what she said before!" The awed gasp was Mr. Jarrett's.

The sick man coughed gratingly.

"The shapes move, they twine and roll and swell up. They bulge up against the curtain as if to push through. It is dark; too dark on that side to see. I am afraid if one might push through . . ."

Suddenly the boy whimpered, "I don't like this. It's cold, an' I'm scared."

The doctor could hear the hard breathing of Mr. Jarrett on his left as the table trembled under his sudden shiver. The doctor himself experienced an enveloping depression, an almost physical crawling of the cold hairs up and down his spine. The sick man went into a spasm of violent coughing.

Suddenly the voice screamed, "One of the shapes is almost—my God, it *is* through! It's on this side. I can see—oh God, save me."

"Lights, Jimmy!" snapped the doctor. "Look to the sick man."

The swift flood of illumina-

tion showed Mr. Jarrett gray and beaded with perspiration; the boy in wild-eyed terror; Terry, too, big-eyed, and nervously alert. All of them had felt a sudden stifling weight of a clutching fear that seemed to hang like a destroying wave about to break.

The sick man was in paroxysm of coughing from which he passed into a swoon of exhaustion. Only the woman had remained blissfully unconscious. The voice that had spoken out of her left her untroubled. In heavy peacefulness she slumped in her trance condition.

The doctor leaped round the table to her and placed his hands over her forehead in protection from he did not know exactly what. A chill still pervaded the room; a physical sense of cold and lifting of hair. Some enormous material menace had almost been able to swoop upon a victim. Slowly, with the flashing on of the lights, the horror faded.

The doctor bent over the unconscious lady. Smoothly he began to stroke her face, away from the center towards her temples. As he stroked he talked, softly, reassuringly.

Presently the woman shuddered, heaved ponderously. Her eyes opened blankly, without comprehension. Wonder dawned in them at the confusion.

"I must have been asleep,"

she murmured; and she was able to smile sheepishly. "Tell me, did I—did my guides speak?"

That foolish, innocent question, coming from the only one in the room who knew nothing of what had happened, served to dissipate fear more than all the doctor's reassurances. The others began to take hold of themselves. The doctor was able to turn his attention to the sick man.

"How is his pulse, Jimmy? Hm-m, weak, but still going. He's just exhausted. That thing drew an awful lot of strength out of him. It nearly slipped one over on me; I didn't think it was through into this side yet."

To his hosts he said with impressive gravity, "It is necessary to tell you that we are faced with a situation that is more dangerous than I had thought. There is in this thing a distinct physical danger; it has gone beyond imagination and beyond 'sensing' things. We are up against a malignant entity that is capable of human contacts. We must get the patient up to bed and then I shall try to explain what this danger is."

HE TOOK THE limp form in his arms with hardly an effort and signified to Mrs. Jarrett to lead the way. To all appearances it was no more than an unusually vigorous physician

putting a patient to bed. But the doctor made one or two quite extraordinary innovations.

"Fresh air to the contrary," he said grimly. "Windows must remain shut and bolted. Let me see: iron catches are good. And, Johnny, you just run down to the kitchen and bring me up a fire iron—a poker, tongs, anything. A stove lid lifter will do."

The boy clung to the close edges of the group. The doctor nodded with understanding.

"Mr. Jarrett, will you go? We mustn't leave our patient until we have him properly protected."

In a few moments Mr. Jarrett returned with a plain iron kitchen poker. That was just the thing, the doctor said. He placed it on the floor close along the door jamb. He herded the others out and, coming last himself, shut the door, pausing just a moment to note that the lock was of iron, after which he followed the wondering family down to the living room. They sat expectant, uneasy.

"Now," the doctor began, as though delivering a lecture. "I want you all to listen carefully, because—I must tell you this, much as I dislike to frighten you—this thing has gone so far that a single misstep may mean a death."

He held up his hand. "No, don't interrupt. I'm going to try

to make clear what is difficult enough anyhow; and you must all try to understand it because an error now—even a little foolishness, a moment of forgetfulness—can open the way for a tragedy; because—now let me impress you with this—the thing that you have felt is a palpable force. I can tell you what it is, but I cannot tell you how it came to break into this side. This malignant force is”—he paused to weigh his words—“an elemental. I do not know how the thing was released. Maybe you had nothing to do with it. But you, madam”—to the trembling Mrs. Jarrett—“you caused it by playing with this seance business, about the dangers of which you know nothing. Nor have you taken the trouble even to read up on the subject. You have opened the way to attract this thing to your house; you and the unfortunate, innocent sick man up stairs. You’ve actually invited it to live among you.”

THE FACES OF the audience expressed only fear of the unknown; fear and a blank lack of understanding. The doctor controlled his impatience and continued his lecture.

“I can’t go into the complete theory of occultism here and now; but this much you must understand,” he said, pounding his fist on his knee for empha-

sis; “it is an indubitable fact, known throughout the ages of human existence, and re-established by modern research, that there exist certain vast discarnate forces alongside of us and all around us. These forces function according to certain controlling laws, just as we do. They probably know as little about our laws as we do about theirs.

“There are many kinds of these forces. Forces of a high intelligence, far superior to ours; forces of possibly less intelligence; benevolent forces; malignant ones. They are all loosely generalized as spirits: elementals, subliminals, earthbounds and so on.

“These forces are separated from us, prevented from contact, by—what shall I say? I dislike the word, evil, or curtain; or, as the Bible puts it, the great gulf. They mean nothing. The best simile is perhaps in the modern invention of the radio.

“A certain set of wavelengths, ethereal vibrations, can impinge themselves upon a corresponding instrument attuned to those vibrations. A slight variation in wavelength, and the receiving instrument is a blank, totally unaffected, though it knows that vibrations of tremendous power exist all around it. It must tune in to become receptive to another set of vibrations.

“In something after this manner these discarnate so-called

spirit forces are prevented from impinging themselves upon our consciousness. Sometimes we humans, for reasons of which we are very often unaware, do something, create a condition, which tunes us in with the vibration of a certain group of discarnate forces. Then we become conscious; we establish contact; we, in common parlance, see a ghost."

The lecturer paused. Vague understanding was apparent on the faces of his fascinated audience.

"Good! Now then — I mentioned elementals. Elementals comprise one of these groups of discarnate forces; possibly the lowest of the group and the least intelligent. They have not evolved to human, or even animal form. They are just—shapes."

"Oh, my God!" The shuddering moan came from Mrs. Jarrett. "The shapes that I have sensed!"

"Exactly. You have sensed such a shape. Why have you sensed it? Because somehow, somewhere, something has happened that has enabled one of these elemental entities to tune in on the vibrations of our human wavelength, to break through the veil. What was the cause or how, we have no means of knowing. What we do know about elementals, as has been fully recognized by occultists of the past ages and has been pooh-

poohed only by modern materialism, is that they are, to begin with, malignant; that is, hostile to human life. Then again—now mark this well—they can manifest themselves materially to humans only by drawing the necessary force from a human source, preferably from some human in a state of low resistance; from—a sick man."

"Oh, my—my brother?" Mrs. Jarrett gasped her realization.

The doctor nodded slowly.

"Yes, his condition of low resistance and your thoughtless reaching for a contact in your seances have invited this malignant entity to this house. That is why the sick man has taken this sudden turn for the worse. The elemental is sapping his vitality in order to manifest itself materially. So far you have only felt its malevolent presence. Should it succeed in drawing to itself sufficient force it might be capable of enormous and destructive power. No, no, don't scream now; that doesn't help. You must all get a grip on yourselves so as calmly to take the proper defensive precautions.

"Fortunately we know an antidote; or let me say rather, a deterrent. Like most occult lore, this deterrent has been known and used by all peoples even up to this age of modern skepticism. Savage people throughout the world use it; oriental

peoples with a sensitivity keener than our own use it; modern white people use it, though unconsciously. The literature of magic is full of it.

"It is nothing more or less than iron. Cold iron. The iron nose-ring or toe-ring of the savage; the mantra loha of the Hindoos; the lucky horseshoe of your rural neighbors today. These things are not ornaments; they are amulets.

"We do not know why cold iron should act as a deterrent to certain kinds of hostile forces—call them spirits, if you like. But it is a fact known of old that a powerful antipathy exists between cold iron and certain of the lower orders of unhuman entities: doppelgangers, churels, incubi, wood runners, leperlings, and so on, and including all forms of elementals.

"So powerful is this antipathy that these hostile entities cannot approach a person or pass a passage so guarded. There are other forms of deterrents against some of the other discarnate entities: pentagons, Druid circles, etc., and even the holy water of the Church. Don't ask me why or how—perhaps it has something to do with molecular vibrations. Let us be glad, for the present that we know of this deterrent. And let each of you go to bed now with a poker or a stove lid or whatever you fan-

cy as an amulet, which I assure you will be ample to protect a normal healthy person who does not contrive to establish some special line of contact which may counteract the deterrent. In the case of the sick man I have taken the extra precaution of guarding even the door.

"Now the rest of you go to bed and *stay in your rooms*. If you're nervous, you may sleep all in one room. Dr. Terry and I will sit up andp rowl around a bit. If you hear a noise it will be we doing night watchman. You can sleep in perfect security, unless you commit some piece of astounding foolishness which will open an unguarded avenue of contact. And one more thing: warn your brother, even if he should feel well enough, not in any circumstances to leave his room. Good night; and sleep well—if you can."

HESITANT AND unwilling the family went upstairs; huddled together, fearful of every new sound, every old shadow, not knowing how this horror that had come into the house might manifest itself; hating to go, but worn out by fatigue engendered of extreme terror.

"I bet they sleep all in one room like sardines," commented the doctor.

Terry caught the note of anxiety and asked, "Was that all the straight dope? I mean about

elementals and so on? And iron? Sounds kind of foolish."

The doctor's face was sober, the irises of his indeterminate eyes so pale that they were almost invisible in the artificial light.

"You never listened to a less foolish thing, my boy. It sounds so to you only because you have been bred in the school of modern materialism. What? Is it reasonable to maintain that we have during the last thin fringe of years on humanity's history obliterated what has been known to humanity ever since the first anthropoid hid his head under his hairy arms in terror? We have but pushed these things a little farther away; we have become less sensitive than our forefathers. And, having become less sensitive, we naturally do not inadvertently tune in on any other set of vibrations; and so we proclaim loudly that no such things exist. But we are beginning to learn again; and if you have followed the trend you will surely have noticed that many of our leading men of science, of thought, of letters, have admitted their belief in things which science and religion have tried to deny."

Terry was impressed with the truth of his friend's statement. The possibilities thus opened up made him uneasy.

"Well, er-er, this—this ele-

mental thing," he said uneasily, "can it do anything?"

"It can do"—the indeterminate eyes were far-away pinpoints—"it can do anything, everything. Having once broken into our sphere, our plane, our wavelength—call it what you will—its malignant potentiality is measured only by the amount of force it can draw from its human source of supply. And remember—here is the danger of these things—the measure is not on a par ratio. It doesn't mean that such a malignant entity, drawing a few ounces of energy from a sick man, can exert only those few ounces. In some manner which we do not understand, all the discarnate intelligences know how to step up an almost infinitesimal amount of human energy to many hundreds percent of power; as for instance the 'spirits' that move heavy tables, perform levitation and so on. A malignant spirit can use that power as a deadly, destructive force."

"But, good Lord," burst out Terry, "why should the thing be malignant? Why, if it has broken through, got into tune with human vibrations, why should it want to destroy humans who have never done it any harm?"

The doctor did not reply at once. He was listening, alert and taut.

"Do these people keep a dog, do you know, Jimmy? Would



that be it snuffling outside the door?"

But the noise, if there had been any, had ceased. The silence was sepulchral. The doctor relaxed and took up the last question.

"Why should it want to destroy life? That's something of a poser. I might say, how do I know? But I have a theory. Remember I said that elementals belonged to one of the least intelligent groups of discarnate entities. Now, the lower one goes in the scale of human intelligence, the more prevalent does one find the superstition that by killing one's enemy one acquires the good qualities of that enemy, his strength or his valor or his speed or something. In the lowest scale we find cannibalism, which is, as so many leading ethnologists have demonstrated, not a taste for human flesh, but a ceremony, a ritual whereby the eater absorbs the strength of the victim. And I suppose you know, incidentally, that militant modern atheists maintain that the holy communion is no other than a symbol of that very prevalent idea. An unintelligent elemental, then . . ."

The doctor suddenly gripped his friend's arm. A creak had sounded on the stairs. In the tense silence both men fancied they could detect a soft, sliding

scuffle in that direction. With uncontrollable horror Terry's heart came up to his throat. In one panther bound the doctor reached the door and tore it open. Then he swore in baffled irritation.

THROUGH THE open door Terry could hear distinctly scurrying steps on the first landing. In sudden access of horror at being left alone he leaped from his chair to follow his friend, and bumped into him at the door.

Dr. Muncing, cursing his luck in a most plebian manner, noted his expression and became immediately the scientist again.

"What's this, what's this? This won't do. Scare leaves you vulnerable. Now let me psycho-analyze you and eliminate that. Sit down and get this; it's quite simple and quite necessary before we start out chasing this thing. You feel afraid for two reasons. The first is psychological. Our forebears knew that certain aspects of the supernatural were genuinely fearsome. Unable to differentiate the superstition grew amongst the laity that all aspects were to be feared, just as most people fear all snakes, though only six percent of them are poisonous. You have inherited both fear and superstition. Secondly, in this particular case, you sense the hostility of this thing and its

potential power for destruction. Therefore, you are afraid."

Under the doctor's cold logic, his friend was able to regain at least a grip on his emotions. With a smile he said, "That's pretty thin comfort when even you admit its power for destruction."

"*Potential*," I said. "Don't forget, *potential*," urged the doctor. "Its power is capable of becoming enormous. Up to the present it has not been able to absorb very much energy. It evaded us just now instead of attacking us, and we have shut off its source of supply. Remember, too, its manifestation of itself must be physical. It may claw your hair in the dark; perhaps push you over the banisters if it gets a chance; but it can't sear your brain and blast your soul. It has drawn to itself sufficient physical energy to make itself heard; that means to be felt, and possibly to be seen. It has materialized; it cannot suddenly fade through walls and doors."

"To be seen?" said Terry in awe-struck tones. "Good gosh, what does a tangible hate look like?"

The doctor nodded. "Well put, Jimmy; very well expressed. A tangible hate is just what this thing is. And since it is inherently a formless entity, a shape in the dark, manifesting itself by drawing upon human

energy, it will probably look like some gross distortion of human form. Just malignant eyes, maybe; or clutching hands; or perhaps something more complete. Its object will be to skulk about the house seeking for an opening to absorb more energy to itself. Ours must be to rout it out."

Mentally Terry was convinced. He could not fail to be, after that lucid exposition of exactly what they were up against. But physically the fine hair still rose on his spine. Shapeless things that could hate and could lurk in dark corners to trip one up on the stairs were sufficient reason for the very acme of human fear. However, he stood up. "I'm with you," he said shortly. "Go ahead."

The doctor held out his hand. "Stout fellow. I knew you would, of course; and I brought this along for you as being quite the best weapon for this sort of a job. A blackjack in hand is a strong psychological bracer, and it has the virtue of being iron."

Terry took the weighty little thing with a feeling of vast security, which was instantly dispelled by the doctor's next words.

"I suppose," said Terry, "that on account of the iron the thing can't approach one."

"Don't fool yourself," said the other. "Iron is a deterrent. Not

an absolute talisman in every case. We are going after this thing; we are *inviting* contact. Well, just as a savage dog may attack a man who is going after it with a club; so our desperate elemental, if it sees a chance, may — well, I don't know what it can do yet. Stick close, that's all."

TOGETHER THE two men went up the stairs and stood in the upper hall. Four bedrooms and a bathroom opened off this. Two of the rooms, they knew to be occupied. The other doors stood similarly closed.

"We've got to try the rooms," the doctor whispered. "It probably can, if necessary, open an unlocked door; though I doubt whether it would turn an iron key."

Firmly, without hesitation, he opened one of the doors and stepped into the room. The doctor switched on the light. Nothing was to be seen, nothing heard, nothing felt.

"We'd sense it if it were here," said the doctor as coolly as though hunting for nothing more tangible than an odor of escaping gas. "It must be in the other empty room. Come on."

He threw the door of that room wide open and stood, shoulder-to-shoulder with Terry, on the threshold. But there was nothing; no sound; no sensation.

"Queer," muttered the doctor. "It came up the stairs. It would hardly go into the bathroom, with an iron tub in it — though God knows, maybe cast iron molecules don't repel like hand-wrought metal."

The bathroom drew blank. The two men looked at each other, and now Terry was able to grin. This matter of hunting for a presence that evaded them was not nearly so fearsome as his imagination had conjured up. The doctor's eyes narrowed to slits as he stood in thought.

"Another example," he murmured, "of the many truths in the Bible about the occult. Face the devil and he will fly from you, eh? I wonder where the devil this devil can be?"

As though in immediate answer came the rasping sounds of a dry grating cough.

Instinctively both men's heads flew round to face the sick man's door. But that remained undisturbed; the patient seemed to be sleeping soundly. Suddenly the doctor gripped his friend's arm and pointed — up to the ceiling.

"From the attic. See that trapdoor. It has taken on the cough with the vital energy it has been drawing from the sick man. I guess there'll be no lights up there. I'll go and get my flashlight. You stay here and guard the stairs. Then you can give me a boost up."

The doctor was becoming more incredible every minute.

"You mean to say you propose to stick your head up through there?"

The doctor nodded soberly; his eyes were now black beads.

"It's quite necessary. You see, we've got to chase this thing out of this house while it is still weak, and then protect all entrances. Then, if it cannot quickly establish a contact with some other sick and non-resistant source of energy it must go back to where it came from. Without a constant replenishment of human energy it can't keep up the human vibrations. That's the importance of shutting it out while it is still too weak to break through anybody else's resistance somewhere else. It's quite simple, isn't it? You sit tight and play cat over the mouse hole. I'll be right up again."

Cat-like himself, the doctor ran down the steps. Terry felt chilled despite the fact that the hall was well lighted and he was armed. But that black square up there — if any cover belonged over it, it had been removed. The hole gaped dark, forbidding; and somewhere beyond it in the misty gloom a formless thing coughed consumptively. Terry, gazing at the hole in fascinated horror, imagined for himself a sudden framing of

baleful eyes, a reaching down of a long taloned claw.

It grew to a horror, staring at that black opening, as into an evil world beyond. The effort of concentration became intolerable. Terry felt that he could not for the life of him hold his stare; he had to relieve himself of that tension or he would scream. He felt that cry welling up in his throat and the chill rising of hair on his scalp. He let his eyes drop and took a long breath to recover the control that was slipping from him.

There came a sharp click from the direction of the electric switch, and the hall was in sudden blackness.

Terry stood frozen, the cry choked in his throat. He could not tell how long he remained transfixed. An age passed in motionless fear of he did not know what. What had turned off the lights?

In the blackness a board creaked with awful deliberation. Terry could not tell where. His faculties refused to register. Only his wretched imagination — or was it his imagination? — conjured up a shadow, darker than the dark, poised on one grotesque foot like some monstrous misshaped carrion bird, watching him with a fell intentness. His pulse hammered at his temples for what seemed an eternity of horror. He computed time later by the fact that

his eyes were becoming accustomed to the dim glow that came from the light downstairs.

Another board creaked, and now Terry felt his knees growing limp. But that was the doctor's firm step on the lower stairs. Terry's knees stiffened and he began to be able to breathe once more.

The shadow seemed to know that Dr. Muncing was returning, too. Terry was aware of a rush, of a dimly monstrous density of blackness that launched itself at him. He was hurled numbingly against the wall by a muffling air-cushion soft of impact. Helplessly dazed, smothered, he did not know how to resist, to defend himself. He was lost. And then the glutinous pressure recoiled, foiled. He could almost hear the baffled hate that withdrew from him and hurtled down the stairs.

His senses registered the fact that without his own volition he shouted, "Look out!" and that there was a commotion somewhere below. He heard a stamping of feet and a surge of wind as though a window had been blasted open; and the next thing was the doctor's inquiry, "Are you hurt?" and the beam of a flashlight racing up the steps.

He was not hurt; miraculously, it seemed to him, for the

annihilating malevolence of that formless creature had appeared to be a vast force. But the doctor dressed him down severely.

"You lost your nerve, in spite of all that I explained to you. You let it influence your mind to fear and so play right into its hands. You laid yourself open to attack as smoothly as though you were Mrs. Jarrett herself. But out of that very evil we can draw the good of exemplary proof.

"You were helpless; paralyzed. And yet the thing drew off. Why? Because you had your iron blackjack in your hand. If it had known you had that defense it would never have attacked you, or it would have influenced you to put the iron down first. Knowing now that you have it, it will not, in its present condition of weakness, attack you again. So stick that in your hat and don't get panicky again. But we've got to keep after it. If we can keep it out of the house; if we can continue so to guard the sick man that the thing cannot draw any further energy from him its power to manifest itself must dwindle. We shall starve it out. And the more we can starve it, the less power will it have to break through the resistance of a new victim."

"Come on, then," said Terry.

"Good man," approved the

doctor. "Come ahead. It went through the living room window; that was the only one open. But, why, I ask myself. Why did it go out? That was just what we wanted it to do. I wonder whether it is up to some devilish trick. The thing can think with a certain animal cunning. We must shut and lock the living room window and go out at the door. What trick has that thing in store, I wonder? What damnable trick?"

"How are we going to find an abstract hate in this maze of shadows?" Terry wanted to know.

"It is more than abstract," said the doctor seriously. "Having broken into our plane of existence, this thing has achieved, as you have already felt, a certain state of semi-materialization. A ponderable substance has formed round the nucleus of malignant intelligence. As long as it can draw upon human energy from its victim, that material substance will remain. In moving from place to place, it must make a certain amount of noise. And, drawing its physical energy from this particular sick man, it must cough as he does. In a good light, even in this bright moonlight, it will be, to a certain extent, visible."

**BUT NO RUSTLINGS** and scurryings fled before their flashlights amongst the orna-

mental evergreens; no furtive shadow flitted across moonlight patches; no sense of hate hung in the darkest corners.

"I hope to God it didn't give us the slip and sneak in again before we got the entries fixed. But no, I'm sure it wasn't in the house. I wish I could guess what tricks it's up to." The doctor was more worried than he cared to let his friend see. He was convinced that leaving the house had been a deliberate move on the thing's part and he wished that he might fathom whatever cunning purpose lay back of that move.

All of a sudden the sound of footsteps impinged upon their ears; faint shuffling. Both men tensed to listen, and they could hear the steps coming nearer. The doctor shook his head.

"It's just some countryman trudging home along the road. If he sees us with flashlights at this hour he'll raise a howl of burglars, no doubt."

The footsteps approached ploddingly behind the fence, one of those nine-foot high ornamental screens made of split chestnut saplings that are so prevalent around country houses. Presently the dark figure of the man — Terry was quite relieved to see that it was a man — passed before the open gate, and the footsteps trudged on behind the tall barrier.

Fifty feet, a hundred feet;

the crunch of heavy nailed boots was growing fainter. Then something rustled amongst the bushes. Terry caught at the doctor's sleeve.

"There! My God! There again!"

A crouching something ran with incredible speed along this side of the fence after the unsuspecting footsteps of the other. In the patches of moonlight between black shadows it was easily distinguishable. It came abreast with the retreating footsteps and suddenly it jumped. Without preparation or take-off, apparently without effort, the swiftly scuttling thing shot itself straight into the air.

Both men saw a ragged-edged form, as that of an incredibly tall and thin man with an abnormally tiny head, clear the nine-foot fence with bony knees drawn high and attenuated ape arms flung wide; an opium eater's nightmare silhouette against the dim sky. And then it was gone.

In the instant that they stood rooted to the spot, a shriek of inarticulate terror rose from the road. There was a spurt of flying gravel, a mad plunging of racing footsteps, more shrieks, the last rising to the high-pitched falsetto of the acme of fear. Then a lurching fall and an awful silence.

"Good God!" The doctor was racing for the gate, Terry after

him. A hundred feet down the road a dark mass huddled on the ground; there was not a sign of anything else. The misshapen shadow had vanished. The man on the ground rolled limp, giving vent to great gulping moans. The doctor lifted his shoulders against his own knee.

"Keep a look out, Jimmy," he warned. His deft hands were exploring for a hurt or wound, while his rapid fire of comments gave voice to his findings. "What damned luck! Still, I don't see what it could have done to a sturdy lout like this. How could we have guarded against this sort of a mischance? Though it just couldn't have crashed into this fellow's vitality so suddenly; there doesn't seem to be anything wrong, anyhow. I guess he's more scared than hurt."

The moaning hulk of a man squirmed and opened his eyes. Feeling himself in the grip of hands, he let out another fearful yell and struggled in a frenzy to escape.

"Easy, brother, easy," the doctor said soothingly. "You're all right. Get a hold of yourself."

The man shuddered convulsively. Words babbled from his sagging lips.

"It-it-its ha-hand! Oh, G—gor — over my face. A h-hand like an eel — a dead ee-eel. Ee-ee!"

He went off into a high-pitched hysteria again.

There was a sound of windows opening up at the house and a confused murmur of anxious voices; then a hail.

"What is it? Who's there? What's the matter?"

"Lord help the fools!" The doctor dropped the man cold in the road and sprang across to the other side from where he could look over the high fence and see the square of patches of light from the windows high up on their little hill.

"Back!" he screamed. "Get back! For God's sake, shut those windows!"

He waved his hands and jumped down in an agony of apprehension.

"What?" The fatuous query floated down to him. "What's that you say?"

Another square of light suddenly sprang out of the looming mass, from the sick man's room. Laboriously the window went up, and the sick man leaned out.

"What?" he asked, and he coughed out into the night.

"God Almighty! Come on, Jimmy! Leave that fool; he's only scared." The doctor shouted and dashed off on the long sprint back to the gate and up the sloping shrubbery to the house that he had thought to leave so well guarded.

"That's its trick," he panted as he ran. "That's why it came out. Please Providence we won't come too late. But it's got the start on us, and it can move ten times as fast."

Together they burst through the front door, slammed it after them, and thundered up the stairs. The white, owl-like faces of the Jarrett family gleamed palely at them from their door. The doctor cursed them for fools as he dashed past. He tore at the knob of the sick-room door.

The door did not budge.

Frantically he wrestled with it. It held desperately solid.

"Bolted from the inside!" the doctor screamed. "The fool must have done it himself. Open up in there. Quick! Open for your life."

The door remained cold and dead. Only from inside the room came the familiar hacking cough. It came in a choking fit. And then Terry's blood ebbed in a chill wave right down to his feet.

*For there were two coughs.* A ghastly chorus of rasping and retching in a hell's paroxysm.

The doctor ran back the length of the hall. Pushing off from the further wall, he dashed across and crashed his big shoulders against the door. Like petty nails the bolt screws flew and he staggered in, clutching



the sagging door for support.

The room was in heavy darkness. The doctor clawed wildly along the wall for the unfamiliar light switch. Terry, at his heels, felt the wave of malevolence that met them.

The sudden light revealed to their blinking eyes the sick man, limp, inert, lying where he had been hurled, half in and half out of the bed, twisted in a horrible paroxysm.

The window was open, as the wretched dupe had left it when he poked his foolish head out into the night to inquire about all the hubbub outside. Above the corner of the sill, hanging outside, was a horror that drew both men up short. An abnormally long angle of raggy elbow supported a smudgy, formless, yellow face of incredible evil that grinned malignant triumph out of an absurdly infantile head.

The face dropped out of sight. Only hate, like a tangible thing, pervaded the room. From twenty feet below came back to the trembling men a grating, "och-och-och, ha-ha ha-heh-heh-heck, och — och." It retreated down the shrubbery.

Dr. Muncing stood a long minute in choked silence. Then bitterly he swore. Slowly, with incisive grimness he said, "Man's ingenuity can guard against

everything except the sheer dumb stupidity of man."

IT WAS MORNING. Dr. Muncing was taking his leave. He was leaving behind him a few last words of advice. They were not gentle.

"I shall say no more about the criminal stupidity of opening your windows after my warning to you; perhaps the thing was able to influence all of you. Your brother, madam, has paid the price. Through your fault and his, there is now loose, somewhere in our world, an elemental entity, malignant and having sufficient human energy to continue. Where or how, I cannot say. It may turn up in the next town, it may do so in China; or something may happen to dissipate it.

"As far as you are concerned it is through. It has tapped this source of energy and has gone on. It will not come back, unless you, madam, go out of your way deliberately to attract it by fooling with these silly seances before you have learned a lot more about them than you know now."

Mrs. Jarrett was penitent and very wholesomely frightened, besides. She would never play with fire again, she vowed; she would have nothing at all to do with it ever again; she would be glad if the doctor would take away her ouija board and her

planchette and all her notebooks; everything. She was afraid of them; she felt that some horrible influence still attached to them.

"Notebooks?" The doctor was interested. "You mean you took notes of the babble that came through? Let me see. Hm-m, the usual stuff; projected reversal of your own conceptions of the hereafter and how happy all your relatives are there. Ha, what's this? Numbers, numbers — twelve, twenty-four, eight — all the bad combinations of numbers. What perversity made you think only of bad numbers? Hello, hello, what— From where did you get this recurring ten, five, eight, one, fourteen? A whole page of it. And here again. And here; eighteen, one, ten? Pages and pages — and a lot of worse ones here? How did this come?"

Mrs. Jarrett was tearful and appeared somewhat hesitant.

"They just came through like that, Doctor. They kept on coming. We just wrote them down."

The doctor was very serious. A thin whistle formed in his pursed lips. His eyes were dark pools of wonder.

"There are more things in heaven and earth —" he muttered. Then shaking off the awe that had come over him, he turned to Mrs. Jarrett.

"My dear lady," he said. "I apologize about those open windows. This thing was able to project its influence from even the other side of the veil. *It made you invite it.* Don't ask me to explain these mysteries. But listen to what you have been playing with." The doctor paused to let his words soak in.

"These numbers, translated into their respective letters, are the beginning of an ancient *Hindoo Yogi spell to invoke a devil*. Merciful heaven, how many things we don't understand. So that's how it came through. And there is no Yogi spell to send it back. We shall probably meet again, that thing and I."



# The Affair at 7 Rue de M-

by John Steinbeck

Nobel Prize winner, John Steinbeck, hardly needs any introduction; his novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*, is one of the notable works of the century, and the fine motion picture made from it late in the 30's retains its vitality and is still being displayed. The present tale is somewhat different and, we suspect, not entirely serious. However, even while we laughed, we felt a sort of twinge — it could be rather ghastly, if it actually happened.

I HAD HOPED to withhold from public scrutiny those rather curious events which have given me some concern for the past month. I knew of course, that there was talk in the neighborhood; I have even heard some of the distortions current in my district — stories, I hasten to add, in which there

is no particle of truth. However, my desire for privacy was shattered yesterday by a visit of two members of the fourth estate who assured me that the story, or rather, *a* story, had escaped the boundaries of my *arrondissement*.

In the light of impending publicity I think it only fair to

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issue the true details of those happenings which have come to be known as The Affair at 7 rue de M—, in order that nonsense may not be added to a set of circumstances which are not without their *bizarrierie*. I shall set down the evnts as they happened without comment, thereby allowing the public to judge of the situation.

At the beginning of the summer I carried my family to Paris and took up residence in a pretty little house at 7, rue de M—, a building which in another period had been the mews of the great house beside it. The whole property is now owned and part of it inhabited by a noble French family of such age and purity that its members still consider the *Bourbons* unacceptable as claimants to the throne of France.

To this pretty little converted stable with three floors of rooms above a well-paved courtyard, I brought my immediate family, consisting of my wife, my three children (two small boys and a grown daughter), and of course, myself. Our domestic arrangement in addition to the concierge who, as you might say, came with the house, consists of a French cook of great ability, a Spanish maid, and my own secretary, a girl of Swiss nationality whose high attainments and ambitions are only equaled by her moral

altitude. This then was our little family group when the events I am about to chronicle were ushered in.

If one must have an agency in this matter, I can find no alternative to placing not the blame but rather the authorship, albeit innocent, on my younger son John who has only recently attained his eighth year, a lively child of singular beauty and buck teeth.

This young man has, during the last several years in America, become not so much an addict as an aficionado of that curious American practice, the chewing of bubble gum, and one of the pleasanter aspects of the early summer in Paris lay in the fact that the Cadet John had neglected to bring any of the atrocious substance with him from America. The child's speech became clear and unobstructed and the hypnotized look went out of his eyes.

Alas, this delightful situation was not long to continue. An old family friend traveling in Europe brought as a present to the children a more than adequate supply of this beastly gum, thinking to do them a kindness. Thereupon the old familiar situation reasserted itself. Speech fought its damp way past a huge wad of the gum and emerged with the sound of a faulty water trap.

The jaws were in constant motion, giving the face at best a look of agony, while the eyes took on a glaze like those of a pig with a recently severed jugular. Since I do not believe in inhibiting my children I resigned myself to a summer not quite so pleasant as I had at first hoped.

On occasion I do not follow my ordinary practice of *laissez-faire*. When I am composing the material for a book or play or essay, in a word, when the utmost of concentration is required, I am prone to establish tyrannical rules for my own comfort and effectiveness. One of these rules is that there shall be neither chewing nor bubbling while I am trying to concentrate. This rule is so thoroughly understood by the Cadet John that he accepts it as one of the laws of nature and does not either complain or attempt to evade the ruling. It is his pleasure and my solace for my son to come sometimes into my workroom, there to sit quietly beside me for a time. He knows he must be silent and when he has remained so for as long a time as his character permits, he goes out quietly, leaving us both enriched by the wordless association.

TWO WEEKS AGO in the late afternoon, I sat at my desk composing a short essay for

*Fugaro Litteraire*, an essay which later aroused some controversy when it was printed under the title "Sartre Resartus". I had come to that passage concerning the proper clothing for the soul when to my astonishment and chagrin I heard the unmistakable soft plopping sound of a bursting balloon of bubble gum. I looked sternly at my offspring and saw him chewing away. His cheeks were colored with embarrassment and the muscles of his jaws stood rigidly out.

"You know the rule," I said coldly.

To my amazement tears came into his eyes and while his jaws continued to masticate hugely, his blubbery voice forced its way past the huge lump of bubble gum in his mouth. "I didn't do it!"

"What do you mean, you didn't do it?" I demanded in a rage. "I distinctly heard and now I distinctly see."

"Oh sir!" he moaned, "I really didn't. I'm not chewing it, sir. It's chewing me."

For a moment I inspected him closely. He is an honest child, only under the greatest pressure of gain permitting himself an untruth. I had the horrible thought that the bubble gum had finally had its way and that my son's reason was tottering. If this were so, it were better to tread softly. Quietly I

put out my hand. "Lay it here," I said kindly.

My child manfully tried to disengage the gum from his jaws. "It won't let me go," he spluttered.

"Open up," I said and then inserting my fingers in his mouth I seized hold of the large lump of gum and, after a struggle in which my fingers slipped again and again, managed to drag it forth and to deposit the ugly blob on my desk on top of a pile of white manuscript paper.

For a moment it seemed to shudder there on the paper and then with an easy slowness it began to undulate, to swell and recede with the exact motion of being chewed while my son and I regarded it with popping eyes.

For a long time we watched it while I drove through my mind for some kind of explanation. Either I was dreaming or some principle as yet unknown had taken its seat in the pulsing bubble gum on the desk. I am not unintelligent; while I considered the indecent thing, a hundred little thoughts and glimmerings of understanding raced through my brain. At last I asked, "How long has it been chewing you?"

"Since last night," he replied.

"And when did you first notice, this, this propensity on its part?"

He spoke with perfect can-

dor. "I will ask you to believe me, sir," he said. "Last night before I went to sleep I put it under my pillow as is my invariable custom. In the night I was awakened to find that it was in my mouth. I again placed it under my pillow and this morning it was again in my mouth, lying very quietly. When, however, I became thoroughly awakened, I was conscious of a slight motion and shortly afterward the situation dawned on me that I was no longer master of the gum. It had taken its head. I tried to remove it, sir, and could not. You yourself with all of your strength have seen how difficult it was to extract. I came to your workroom to await your first disengagement, wishing to acquaint you with my difficulty. Oh, Daddy, what do you think has happened?"

The cancerous thing held my complete attention.

"I must think," I said. "This is something a little out of the ordinary, and I do not believe it should be passed over without some investigation."

AS I SPOKE a change came over the gum. It ceased to chew itself and seemed to rest for a while, and then with a flowing movement like those monocellular animals of the order Paramecium, the gum slid across the desk straight in the direction of my son. For a moment I was

stricken with astonishment and for an even longer time I failed to discern its intent. It dropped to his knee, climbed horribly up his shirt front. Only then did I understand. It was trying to get back into his mouth. He looked down on it paralyzed with fright.

"Stop," I cried, for I realized that my third-born was in danger and at such times I am capable of a violence which verges on the murderous. I seized the monster from his chin and striding from my workroom, entered the salon, opened the window and hurled the thing into the busy traffic on the rue de M-.

I believe it is the duty of a parent to ward off those shocks which may cause dreams or trauma whenever possible. I went back to my study to find young John sitting where I had left him. He was staring into space. There was a troubled line between his brows.

"Son," I said, "you and I have seen something which, while we know it to have happened, we might find difficult to describe with any degree of success to others. I ask you to imagine the scene if we should tell this story to the other members of the family. I greatly fear we should be laughed out of the house."

"Yes, sir," he said passively.

"Therefore I am going to propose to you, my son, that we

lock the episode deep in our memories and never mention it to a soul as long as we live." I waited for his assent and when it did not come, glanced up at his face to see it a ravaged field of terror. His eyes were starting out of his head. I turned in the direction of his gaze. Under the door there crept a paper-thin sheet which, once it had entered the room, grew to a gray blob and rested on the rug, pulsing and chewing. After a moment it moved again by pseudopodian progression toward my son.

I fought down panic as I rushed at it. I grabbed it up and flung it on my desk, then seizing an African war club from among the trophies on the wall, a dreadful instrument studded with brass, I beat the gum until I was breathless and it a torn piece of plastic fabric. The moment I rested, it drew itself together and for a few moments chewed very rapidly, as though it chuckled at my impotence, and then inexorably it moved toward my son, who by this time was crouched in a corner moaning with terror.

Now a coldness came over me. I picked up the filthy thing and wrapped it in my handkerchief, strode out of the house, walked three blocks to the Seine and flung the handkerchief into the slowly moving current.

I spent a good part of the afternoon soothing my son and trying to reassure him that his fears were over. But such was his nervousness that I had to give him half a barbituate tablet to get him to sleep that night, while my wife insisted that I call a doctor. I did not at that time dare to tell her why I could not obey her wish.

I WAS AWAKENED, indeed the whole house was awakened, in the night by a terrified, muffled scream from the children's room. I took the stairs two at a time and burst in the room, flicking the light switch as I went. John sat up in bed squalling, while with his fingers he dug at his half-open mouth, a mouth which horrifyingly went right on chewing. As I looked a bubble emerged between his fingers and burst with a wet plopping sound.

What chance of keeping our secret now! All had to be explained, but with the plopping gum pinned to a breadboard with an ice pick the explanation was easier than it might have been. And I am proud of the help and comfort given me. There is no strength like that of the family. Our French cook solved the problem by refusing to believe it even when she saw it. It was not reasonable, she explained, and she was a reasonable member of a

reasonable people. The Spanish maid ordered and paid for an exorcism by the parish priest who, poor man, after two hours of strenuous effort went away muttering that this was more a matter of the stomach than the soul.

For two weeks we were besieged by the monster. We burned it in the fireplace, causing it to splutter in blue flames and melt in a nasty mess among the ashes. Before morning it had crawled through the keyhole of the children's room, leaving a trail of wood ash on the door, and again we were awakened by screams from the Cadet.

In despair I drove far into the country and threw it from my automobile. It was back before morning. Apparently it had crept to the highway and placed itself in the Paris traffic until picked up by a truck tire. When we tore it from John's mouth it had still the nonskid marks of Michelin imprinted in its side.

Fatigue and frustration will take their toll. In exhaustion, with my will to fight back sapped, and after we had tried every possible method to lose or destroy the bubble gum, I placed it at last under a bell jar which I ordinarily use to cover my microscope. I collapsed in a chair to gaze at it with weary defeated eyes. John



slept in his little bed under the influence of sedatives, backed by my assurance that I would not let the Thing out of my sight.

I lighted a pipe and settled back to watch it. Inside the bell jar the gray tumorous lump moved restlessly about searching for some means of exit from its prison. Now and then it paused as though in thought and emitted a bubble in my direction. I could feel the hatred it had for me. In my weariness I found my mind slipping into an analysis which had so far escaped me.

The background I had been over hurriedly. It must be that from constant association with the lambent life which is my son, the magic of life had been created in the bubble gum. And with life had come intelligence, not the manly open intelligence of the boy, but an evil calculating wiliness.

How could it be otherwise? Intelligence without the soul to balance it must of necessity be evil; the gum had not absorbed any part of John's soul.

Very well, said my mind, now that we have a hypothesis of its origin, let us consider its nature. What does it think? What does it want? What does it need? My mind leaped like a terrier. It needs and wants to get back to its host, my son.

It wants to be chewed. It must be chewed to survive.

Inside the bell jar the gum inserted a thin wedge of itself under the heavy glass foot and constricted so that the whole jar lifted a fraction of an inch. I laughed as I drove it back. I laughed with almost insane triumph. I had the answer.

In the dining room I procured a clear plastic plate, one of a dozen my wife had bought for picnics in the country. Then turning the bell jar over and securing the monster in its bottom, I smeared the mouth of it with a heavy plastic cement guaranteed to be water-, alcohol- and acidproof. I forced the plate over the opening and pressed it down until the glue took hold and bound the plate to the glass, making an airtight container. And last I turned the jar upright again and adjusted the reading light so that I could observe every movement of my prisoner.

Again it searched the circle for escape. Then it faced me and emitted a great number of bubbles very rapidly. I could hear the little bursting plops through the glass.

"I have you, my beauty," I cried. "I have you at last."

THAT WAS A week ago. I have not left the side of the bell jar since, and have only turned my head to accept a

cup of coffee. When I go to the bathroom, my wife takes my place. I can now report the following hopeful news.

During the first day and night, the bubble gum tried every means to escape. Then for a day and a night it seemed to be agitated and nervous as though it had for the first time realized its predicament. The third day it went to work with its chewing motion, only the action was speeded up greatly, like the chewing of a baseball fan. On the fourth day it began to weaken and I observed with joy a kind of dryness on its once slick and shiny exterior.

I am now in the seventh day and I believe it is almost over. The gum is lying in the center of the plate. At intervals it heaves and subsides. Its color has turned to a nasty yellow. Once today when my son entered the room, it leaped up excitedly, then seemed to realize its hopelessness and collapsed on the plate. It will die tonight, I think, and only then will I dig a deep hole in the garden, and I will deposit the sealed bell jar and cover it up and plant geraniums over it.

It is my hope that this account will set straight some of the silly tales that are being hawked in the neighborhood.

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Elsewhere in this issue, we expressed our appreciation to a reader who loaned us a copy of the out-of-print *Jumbie and Other Uncanny Tales*, by Henry S. Whitehead, from which we took *The Black Beast*. A number of you have asked for stories which we would like to offer you, but which we do not have copies of.

In particular: there have been requests for some very good items which appeared originally in *STRANGE TALES*, and which are not available in anthologies currently in print. We need the following issues of this rare and, alas, too short-lived magazine: March, June, and October 1932, and January 1933. We can purchase them, if the price is reasonable, or we could ask for the loan of them. Stories to used therefrom would be photocopied by our printer, and the copies returned to us. We have sent our printer a number of very old and rare issues, including the earlier issues of *ST* which we have, and all have been received back safely, and in good condition. Can any of you help us with these later issues, either for sale or loan?

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# The Man in the Dark

*by Irwin Ross*

Irwin Ross, Ph.D., has appeared frequently in **REAL LIFE GUIDE** with thoughtful and helpful articles dealing with the psychology of sex and marriage; he also appears occasionally in **EXPLORING THE UNKNOWN**. And, since he is a prolific writer, it can be assumed that his range of appearances is a wide one. This is the first work of fiction we have seen from him; you will not find any "supernatural" or "fantasy" horrors in this tale, but we think it may give you a shudder, nonetheless.

**HIS ARMS WERE** leaden as though he had carried a great weight in them for many long hours. Slowly he brought them upward until his hands were immediately before his face. But, as if he knew what they must look like, he stood there with an expression of fear on his face and with his eyes closed as if in sleep.

So he waited alone on a deserted street, his hands held up stiffly and his eyes so tightly closed as to form unusual wrinkles at their corners. Unfortunately, some blind fate had made him stop just within the feeble radiation of a street light. Unfortunately for him at any rate, for it was the one point in the city block where

he could be seen; and thus it happened that a passing patrol car screeched to a stop and two uniformed men spilled out of its doors and walked over to the lonely figure.

He let his arms fall tiredly to his sides as the two policemen hustled him into their vehicle, but he still did not open his eyes; nor, for that matter, did he speak. Because of this passiveness the two patrolmen at first assumed he was just another drunk, the quiet kind, but then they happened to notice his hands and the bulging pockets of his coat and they changed their minds quickly enough.

He might be a drunk, but judging from his hands he had obviously been much more than that during the evening.

After several blustering and futile attempts to make the prisoner talk they gave up and during the rest of the drive to the police station they were grim, watchful-faced, their right hands resting on their pistol holsters. There was no way of knowing what violence someone like this might attempt, so they both were thinking.

At first the prisoner maintained his mask of indifference; he just sat with his eyes closed and supported the heavy weight of his arms. Suddenly he began to shudder, and then the shud-

ders became more pronounced and violent, wave on wave.

The policemen at first were uneasy and both of them involuntarily drew back and exchanged a bewildered glance. They'd certainly never run into a character like this before. The driver brought his foot down hard on the accelerator; he wanted to get to the station as quickly as possible in order to let someone with more authority take over.

THEN THEY WERE there. Quickly, contemptuously, they shoved him out of the patrol car and grasping his shoulders they led him into the chalky light of the station house. His eyes were still closed, and his pale face was immobile. His heavy arms hung limp at his sides; his fists were clenched.

The sergeant at the desk looked up from his paper work. When he saw the prisoner he pushed his swivel chair back; his nostrils wrinkled with disgust, and his eyes sought the young patrolmen.

"Well?"

The prisoner just stood there between his guards without replying, his eyes stubbornly closed, although he turned his head with a spasmodic jerk toward the desk sergeant.

The sergeant said "Well?" again, just as the driver of the patrol car started to speak.

They both stopped in confusion.

The patrolman spoke. "Picked him up down by the stockyards. He's the one all right. There's no doubt about that."

"Yeah," the other patrolman added. "And he isn't talking." He turned to the prisoner. "What's the idea, Mac — are you playing it cagey? Waiting to see your lawyer?"

"Look at him," the first uniformed man said. "That's all you gotta do — and you'll know too that he's the one."

As he spoke he roughly shoved the prisoner against the desk. The resultant jar must have been unexpected for one of the man's hands relaxed slightly as he made a clutching gesture at the desk, and before his fingers closed again a large, bloody eyeball fell to the floor.

He remained stolid and made no attempt to retrieve it — nor did any of the police. It just lay there — so fresh and moist that it seemed alive, looking sullenly out over the oiled wooden floor. The younger of the two patrolmen gagged and took out his handkerchief to wipe the cold sweat that appeared in drops on his forehead.

"Dirty scum of an animal torturer." The sergeant leaned forward over his desk and spoke intently, his eyes shifting away from the man's hands

and the object on the floor to the patrolmen.

Still the prisoner did not speak and his shoulders drooped slightly — his arms were so tired.

"Night after night," the sergeant continued, "you scum, you've been busting into the stockyards and mutilating the poor defenseless beasts. What kind of a lowlife are you? What's the idea? Argh!"

The prisoner just stood there confronting the sergeant with closed eyes, but now his face relaxed from the set look and his lips were quivering.

"Why, man, why? Talk. Why rip out their eyes? Poor tortured beasts. Why their eyes?"

He still refused to speak, so after a bit the sergeant picked up the phone on his desk and called into headquarters.

"Finally got him, Chief. Yep. Yep. Meek as a mouse, except he ain't very conversational. No trouble at all — just wish he *did* want some; it would be a pleasure for me and the boys. Yeah, we got him red-handed and I do mean red-handed. Yeah, a cow's eyeball in each hand and a coat pocket full of them. Okay. Sure, okay. Yes, I'll be sure to do that."

He hung up.

"The chief will be over here in half an hour and he'll want to see the evidence. Well, shove this thing in a cell and

leave him just like he is — hear me, just like he is.”

Now the two young cops felt more comfortable. They were on surer ground. Roughly they grabbed the prisoner and swung him around and started gandy-dancing him from the room.

But just as they reached the door he suddenly wrenched free of their grasp with great, unsuspected strength, and in a single movement he whirled and faced the sergeant. Before the cops had time to grab him

again he spoke for the first time.

“But you don’t understand. Someday I would have found a pair that would fit.”

The room was suddenly quiet, and for a long minute none of the three policemen moved. The man had finally opened his eyelids and now he slowly turned his head from side-to-side trying, as it would seem, to see with nothing but eyeless sockets that were packed with dirty cotton wool.

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Although marginal to the interests of horror and strange story readers (most of its content is concerned with science fiction) the quality of the bulk of material to be found in Mr. Leland Sapiro’s amateur publication, *RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY*, is high enough to bring it to your attention.

The current issue includes the first part of a critique of T. H. White’s fantasy, *The Once and Future King*, by Barbara Floyd, a well as a long article on the first period of Robert A. Heinlein’s career as an author, by Alexei Panshin. While both of these items are to be continued; each one is complete so far as it goes; you will not be left hanging in mid-air for three months.

In earlier issues (the current one is the fourth), we have seen a fine three-part article, *The Faustus Tradition in the Early Science Fiction Story*, by Editor Sapiro (issues #1 to 3) and *Sexual Symbolism in Two Stories of William Hope Hodgson*, by Sid Birchby — a thoughtful, not a wise-acre, muck-raking thing. The publication sells for 35c a copy or \$1.25 for four issues, and the address is Box 82 University Station, Saskatoon, Canada.

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# The Abyss

by Robert A. W. Lowndes

(author of *Clarissa*)

You may either thank or blame RICHARD KYLE for requesting this story. Of course, since our policy is to follow requests only if we feel that the story requested is reasonably good, Kyle cannot take *all* the responsibility. It was written originally in 1937 for the second issue of FANCIFUL TALES, an amateur magazine published by Donald A. Wollheim — an issue which never appeared. Revised later, it did appear in the first issue of Wollheim's STIRRING SCIENCE STORIES, which was a combined science fiction and fantasy magazine. (The cover, and the first half was titled as above; but the second half was titled STIRRING FANTASY FICTION.) We have taken advantage of the opportunity to make a few changes, none of them substantial, however.

WE TOOK Graf Norden's body out into the November night, under the stars that burned with a brightness terrible to behold, and drove madly, wildly up the mountain road. The body had to be de-

stroyed because of the eyes that would not close, but seemed to be staring at some object behind the observer, the body that was entirely drained of blood without the slightest trace of a wound, the body

whose flesh was covered with luminous markings, designs that shifted and changed form before one's eyes. We wedged what had been Graf Norden tightly behind the wheel, put a makeshift fuse in the gas tank, lit it, then shoved the car over the side of the road, where it plummeted down to the main highway, a flaming meteor.

Not until the next day did we realize that we had all been under Dureen's spell — even I had forgotten. How else could we have rushed out so eagerly? From that moment when the lights came on again, and we saw the thing that had, a moment before, been Graf Norden, we were as shadowy, indistinct figures rushing through a dream. All was forgotten save the unspoken commands upon us as we watched the blazing car strike the pavement below, observed its demolition, then tramped dully each to his own home. When, the next day, partial memory returned to us and we sought Dureen, he was gone. And, because we valued our freedom, we did not tell anyone what had happened, nor try to discover whence Dureen had vanished. We wanted only to forget.

I think I might possibly have forgotten had I not looked into the *Song of Yste* again. With the others, there has been a growing tendency to treat it as

illusion, but I cannot. It is one thing to read of books like the *Necronomicon*, *Book of Eibon*, or *Song of Yste*, but it is quite different when one's own experience confirms some of the things related therein. I found one such paragraph in the *Song of Yste* and have not read farther. The volume, along with Norden's other books, is still on my shelves; I have not burned it. But I do not think I shall read more . . .

I MET Graf Norden in 193—, at Darwich University, in Dr. Held's class in Mediaeval and early-Renaissance history, which was more a study of obscure thought and occultism.

Norden was greatly interested; he had done quite a bit of exploring into the occult; in particular was he fascinated by the writings and records of a family of adepts named Dirka, who traced their ancestry back to the pre-glacial days. They, the Dirkas, had translated the *Song of Yste* from its legendary form into the three great languages of the dawn cultures, then into the Greek, Latin, Arabic and Middle English.

I told Norden that I deplored the blind contempt in which the world holds the occult, but had never explored the subject very deeply. I was content to be a spectator, letting my imagination drift at will upon



the many currents in this dark river; skimming over the surface was enough for me — seldom did I take occasional plunges into the deeps. As a poet and dreamer, I was careful not to lose myself in the blackness of the pools where I disported — one could always emerge to find a calm, blue sky and a world that thought nothing of these realities.

With Norden, it was different. He was already beginning to have doubts, he told me. It was not an easy road to travel; there were hideous dangers, hidden all along the way, often so that the wayfarer was not aware of them until too late. Earthmen were not very far along the path of evolution; still very young, their lack of knowledge, as a race, told heavily against such few of their number who sought to traverse unknown roads. He spoke of messengers from beyond and made references to obscure passages in the *Necronomicon* and *Song of Yste*. He spoke of alien beings, entities terribly unhuman, impossible of measurement by any human yardstick or to be combated effectively by mankind.

DUREEN CAME into the picture at about this time. He walked into the classroom one day during the course of a lecture; later, Dr. Held introduced him as a new member of the

class, coming from abroad. There was something about Dureen that challenged my interest at once. I could not determine of what race or nationality he might be — he was very close to being beautiful, his every movement being of grace and rhythm. Yet, in no way could he be considered effeminate.

That the majority of us avoided him troubled him not at all. For my part, he did not seem genuine, but, with the others, it was probably his utter lack of emotion. There was, for example, the time in the lab when a test tube burst in his face, driving several splinters deep into the skin. He showed not the slightest sign of discomfort, waved aside all expressions of solicitude on the part of some of the girls, and proceeded to go on with his experiment as soon as the medico had finished with him.

The final act started when we were dealing with suggestion and hypnotism, one afternoon, and were discussing the practical possibilities of the subject. Colby presented a most ingenious argument against it, ridiculed the association of experiments in thought transference or telepathy with suggestion, and arrived at a final conclusion that hypnotism (outside of mechanical means of induction) was impossible.

It was at this point that Dureen spoke up. What he said, I cannot now recall, but it ended in a direct challenge for Dureen to prove his statements. Norden said nothing during the course of this debate; he appeared somewhat pale, and was, I noticed, trying to flash a warning signal to Colby.

THERE WERE five of us over at Norden's place that night: Granville, Chalmers, Colby, Norden, and myself. Norden was smoking endless cigarettes, gnawing his nails, and muttering to himself. I suspected something irregular was up, but what, I had no idea. Then Dureen came in and the conversation, such as it had been, ended.

Colby repeated his challenge, saying he had brought along the others as witnesses to insure against being tricked by stage devices. No mirrors, light, or any other mechanical means of inducing hypnosis would be permitted. It must be entirely a matter of wills. Dureen nodded, drew the shade, then turned, directing his gaze at Colby.

We watched, expecting him to make motions with his hands and pronounce commands: he did neither. He fixed his eyes upon Colby and the latter stiffened as if struck by lightning, then, eyes staring blankly ahead

of him, he rose slowly, standing on the narrow strip of black that ran diagonally down through the center of the rug.

My mind ran back to the day I caught Norden in the act of destroying some papers and apparatus, the latter which had been constructed, with such assistance as I had been able to give, over a period of several months. His eyes were terrible and I could see doubt in them. Not long after this event, Dureen had made his appearance: could there have been a connection, I wondered?

My reverie was broken abruptly by the sound of Dureen's voice commanding Colby to speak, telling us where he was and what he saw around him. When Colby obeyed, it was as if his voice came to us from a distance.

He was standing, he said, on a narrow bridgeway overlooking a frightful abyss, so vast and deep that he could discern neither floor nor boundary. Behind him this bridgeway stretched until it was lost in a bluish haze; ahead, it ran toward what appeared to be a plateau. He hesitated to move because of the narrowness of the path, yet realized that he must make for the plateau before the very sight of the depths below him made him lose his balance. He felt strange-

ly heavy, and speaking was an effort.

As Colby's voice ceased, we all gazed in fascination at the little strip of black in the blue rug. This, then, was the bridge over the abyss . . . but what could correspond to the illusion of depth? Why did his voice seem so far away? Why did he feel heavy? The plateau must be the workbench at the other end of the room: the rug ran up to a sort of dais upon which was set Norden's table, the surface of this being some seven feet above the floor. Colby now began to walk slowly down the black swath, moving as if with extreme caution, looking like a slow-motion camera-shot. His limbs appeared weighted; he was breathing rapidly.

Dureen now bade him halt and look down into the abyss carefully, telling us what he saw there. At this, we again examined the rug, as if we had never seen it before and did not know that it was entirely without decoration save for that single black strip upon which Colby now stood.

**HIS VOICE CAME** to us again. He said, at first, that he saw nothing in the abyss below him. Then he gasped, swayed, and almost lost his balance. We could see the sweat standing out on his brow and neck, soaking his blue shirt. There were

things in the abyss, he said in hoarse tones, great shapes that were like blobs of utter blackness, yet which he knew to be alive. From the central masses of their beings he could see them shoot forth incredibly long, filamentine tentacles. They moved themselves forward and backward — horizontally, but could not move vertically, it seemed.

But the things were not all on the same plane. True, their movements were only horizontal in relation to their position, but some were parallel to him and some diagonal. Far away he could see things perpendicular to him. There appeared now to be a great deal more of the things than he thought. The first ones he had seen were far below, unaware of his presence. But these sensed him, and were trying to reach him. He was moving faster now, he said, but to us he was still walking in slow-motion.

I glanced sidewise at Norden; he, too, was sweating profusely. He arose now, and went over to Dureen, speaking in low tones so that none of us could hear. I knew that he was referring to Colby and that Dureen was refusing whatever it was Norden demanded. Then Dureen was forgotten momentarily as Colby's voice came to us again quivering with fright. The things were reaching out

for him. They rose and fell on all sides; some far away; some hideously close. None had found the exact plane upon which he could be captured; the darting tentacles had not touched him, but all of the beings now sensed his presence, he was sure. And he feared that perhaps they could alter their planes at will, though, it appeared that they must do so blindly, seemingly like two-dimensional beings. The tentacles darting at him were threads of utter darkness.

A terrible suspicion arose in me, as I recalled some of the earlier conversations with Norden, and remembered certain passages from the *Song of Yste*. I tried to rise, but my limbs were powerless: I could only sit helplessly and watch. Norden was still speaking with Dureen and I saw that he was now very pale. He seemed to shrink away — then he turned and went over to a cabinet, took out some object, and came to the strip of rug upon which Colby was standing. Norden nodded to Dureen and now I saw what it was he held in his hand: a polyhedron of glassy appearance. There was in it, however, a glow that startled me. Desperately I tried to remember the significance of it — for I knew — but my thoughts were being short-circuited, it seemed, and, when Dureen's

eyes rested upon me, the very room seemed to stagger.

Again Colby's voice came through, this time despairingly. He was afraid he would never reach the plateau. (Actually, he was about a yard and a half away from the end of the black strip and the dais upon which stood Norden's work bench.) The things, said Colby, were close now: a mass of thread-like tentacles had just missed him.

Now Norden's voice came to us; it, too, seemingly far away. He called my name. This was more, he said, than hypnotism. It was — but then his voice faded and I felt the power of Dureen blanking out the sound of his words. Now and then, I would hear a sentence or a few disjointed words. But, from this I managed to get an inkling of what was going on.

This was actually trans-dimensional journeying. We just imagined we saw Norden and Colby standing on the rug — or perhaps it was through Dureen's influence.

The nameless dimension was the habitat of these shadow-beings. The abyss, and the bridge upon which the two stood, were illusions created by Dureen. When that which Dureen had planned was complete, our minds would be probed, and our memories treated so that we recalled no more than Dureen wished us to remember.

Norden had succeeded in forcing an agreement upon Dureen, one which he would have to keep; as a result, if the two could reach the plateau before the shadow-beings touched them, all would be well. If not — Norden did not specify, but indicated that they were being hunted, as men hunt game. The polyhedron contained an element repulsive to the things.

He was but a little behind Colby; we could see him aiming with the polyhedron. Colby spoke again, telling us that Norden had materialized behind him, and had brought some sort of weapon with which the things could be held off.

Then Norden called my name, asking me to take care of his belongings if he did not return, telling me to look up the "adumbrali" in the *Song of Yste*. Slowly, he and Colby made their way toward the dais and the table. Colby was but a few steps ahead of Norden; now he climbed upon the dais, and, with the other's help, made his way onto the bench. He tried to assist Norden, but, as the latter mounted the dais, he stiffened suddenly and the polyhedron fell from his hands. Frantically he tried to draw himself up, but he was being forced backward and I knew that he had lost. . . .

There came to us a single cry of anguish, then the lights

in the room faded and went out. Whatever spell had been upon us now was removed; we rushed about like madmen, trying to find Norden, Colby, and the light switch. Then, suddenly, the lights were on again and we saw Colby sitting dazedly on the bench, while Norden lay on the floor. Chalmers bent over the body, in an effort to resuscitate him, but when he saw that the condition of Norden's remains he became so hysterical that we had to knock him cold in order to quiet him.

COLBY FOLLOWED us mechanically, apparently unaware of what was happening. We took Graf Norden's body out into the November night and destroyed it by fire, telling Colby later that he had apparently suffered a heart attack while driving up the mountain road; the car had gone over and his body was incinerated in the holocaust.

Later, Chalmers, Granville, and I met in an effort to rationalize what we had seen and heard. Chalmers had been all right after he came around, had helped us with our grisly errand up the mountain road. Neither, I found, had heard Norden's voice after he had joined Colby in the supposed hypnotic stage. Nor did they recall seeing any object in Norden's hand.

But, in less than a week, even these memories had faded from them. They fully believed that Norden had died in an accident after an unsuccessful attempt on the part of Dureen to hypnotize Colby. Prior to this, their explanation had been that Dureen had killed Norden, for reasons unknown, and that we had been his unwitting accomplices. The hypnotic experiment had been a blind to gather us all together and provide a means of disposing of the body. That Dureen had been able to hypnotize us, they did not doubt then.

It would have been no use to tell them what I learned a few days later, what I learned from Norden's notes which explain Dureen's arrival. Or to quote sections from the *Song of Yste* put into comprehensible English, to them.

*" . . . And these be none other than the adumbrali, the living shadows, beings of incredible power and malignancy, which dwell without the veils of space and time such as we know it. Their sport it is to import into their realm the inhabitants of other dimensions, upon whom they practice horrid pranks and manifold illusions . . . "*

*" . . . But more dreadful than these are the seekers which they*

*send out into other worlds and dimensions, being which they themselves have created and guised in the form of those who dwell within whatever dimension, or upon whichever worlds where these seekers be sent . . . "*

*" . . . These seekers can be detected only by the adept, to whose trained eyes their too-perfectness of form and movement, their strangeness, and aura of alienage and power is a sure sign. . . . "*

*" . . . The sage, Jhalkanaan, tells of one of these seekers who deluded seven priests of Nyaghoggua into challenging it to a duel of the hypnotic arts. He further tells how two of these were trapped and delivered to the adumbrali, their bodies being returned when the shadow-things had done with them . . . "*

*" . . . Most curious of all was the condition of the corpses, being entirely drained of all fluid, yet showing no trace of a wound, even the most slight. But the crowning horror was the eyes, which could not be closed, appearing to stare restlessly outward, beyond the observer, and the strangely-luminous markings on the dead flesh, curious designs which appeared to move and change form before the eyes of the beholder. . . . "*

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# Books

## DAGON & other Macabre Tales by H. P. Lovecraft

Arkham House, Sauk City, Wisconsin, 1965; jacket artwork by Lee Brown Coye; 413pp; \$6.50.

This collection of 28 short stories, plus five early tales, four fragments, and the essay, *Supernatural Horror in Literature*, brings all the Lovecraft stories back into print. A complete list of Lovecraft's fiction (with the exception of the early tales, fragments, and revisions of other authors' works, which often amounted to collaboration) is given in the introduction, in chronological order, with the year of composition attached. It differs from the chronology that we ran in our June issue, from a letter from T. L. G. Cockcroft only in the order of stories *within* any given year (about which Mr. Cockcroft could not speak) and in the omission of *Dream Quest of Unknown Kadath*, which Cockcroft dated 1926-1927. The stories that appear in the present volume are given in chronological order, except for sections two, three, and four of the volume: early tales, fragments, and the essay.

As Mr. Derleth states in his brief (too brief) introduction, this collection represents every type of story HPL wrote, from the Dunsany-type fantasy (*The Doom That Came to Sarnath*, *The Cats of Ulthar*, *The Strange High House in the Mist*) through his own variations on classic legend (*The Temple*), the visceral horror story (*The Lurking Fear*), to cosmic-scale horror (*The Festival*), which culminated in the Cthulhu Mythos series. For these latter, however, you will have to turn to the

other two Arkham House collections of HPL: *At the Mountains of Madness and Other Novels* (which contains the title novel, *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*, *Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*, *The Shunned House*, *The Dreams in the Witch-House* and the "Randolph Carter" stories: *The Statement of Randolph Carter*, *The Silver Key*, and *Through the Gates of the Silver Key* — this last in collaboration with E. Hoffmann Price) and *The Dunwich Horror and Others*, which contains *The Shadow out of Innsmouth*, and all the other short stories and novelets not in the former or the present volume.

My own introduction to HPL was with *The Strange High House in the Mist*, which I read in *WEIRD TALES* in September 1931 (October 1931 issue) and this story maintains its appeal for me. Some of the tales in the present volume are slight, but enjoyable; some are (for me) sub-standard: *Herbert West — Reanimator*, *Imprisoned with the Pharaohs*, and *The Lurking Fear*; and the early tales and fragments, I should say, are only for the Lovecraft completist. The first two of what I consider the sub-standard tales were, Mr. Derleth notes, the only stories HPL ever wrote "to order" (the second of them was ghost-written for Harry Houdini). However, if I did not already have all these items in the original two HPL volumes issued by Arkham House I would consider the present edition well worth the asking price — and might yet want it (and the other two re-issues) to replace my first editions; as age creeps on the small type used there becomes more



difficult to read. Nonetheless, honesty compels me to add that the essential Lovecraft is to be found in the first two of the three Arkham House re-issues. RAWL

### POEMS IN PROSE

by Clark Aston Smith

Arkham House, Sauk City, Wisconsin 1965; jacket and interior artwork by Frank Utpatel; 54pp plus artwork; and a 26-page introductory essay by Donald S. Fryer; \$4.00.

In the mid 30's, when I was very much under the spell of Baudelaire (in the more romantic renditions by Arthur Symons, Edna St. Vincent Millay, and Clark Ashton Smith), the poetry and prose poems of CAS had a great effect upon me. Looking them over today (I must confess I have not had the courage to read them thoroughly), I still find the language and imagery very beautiful; and for those who respond to this sort of stimulus, here is a well-made book which will be treasured. The artwork is quite good; and the Fryer apology all that one could ask for.

RAWL

### MONSTERS GALORE

Resurrected Bernhardt J. Hurwood  
Gold Medal Books (d1544); soft-covered; 224pp inc. artwork; 50c.

"Although once upon a time," says Mr. Hurwood in his introduction, "the very word 'monster' struck terror into the hearts of all men, a recent sinister trend has wrought drastic changes — unfortunately for the worse. Comic book manufacturers and television producers have inflicted an epidemic of adorable monsters on us. If the insidious propaganda on behalf of these insipid creatures continues to mushroom we are in danger of falling into a trap. We are in peril of being brainwashed into believing that monsters are nothing

more than lovable characters who are at most misunderstood nonconformists. We must escape this fate at all costs.

"As a true believer in the utter depravity, loathsomeness, and vileness of monsters I am forced to strike a blow in behalf of their crumbling image. Thus, in outraged protest I offer this collection of monster stories . . ."

We awaited this collection with not a little trepidation, since Mr. Hurwood was the first anthologist to contact us for anthology rights on material originally appearing in *MAGAZINE OF HORROR*. The fact that he chose the Dean Lipton article, *Hungary's Female Vampire*, gave us hope, however; Countess Bathory was no member of the Munster family (and here we desert Mr. Hurwood now and then, finding them fun however deplorable their effect may be upon the innocent).

Let us say at once, our anxiety was unwarranted; not only is this a handsome, literate, wonderfully illustrated edition, but Mr. Hurwood's other selections are worthy ones (including Kipling's *Mark of the Beast* — which did not, of course, appear in our pages as an original). It also includes some stories on our request list, which we will now consider as "generally available at reasonable prices" and not for MOH. The contents include (in addition to Lipton and Kipling): *The Eyes of the Panther*, by Ambrose Bierce; *The Dreadful Visitor*, by Thomas Preskett Prest; *The Monster-Maker*, by William C. Morrow; *Mohammed Bux and the Demon*, adapted by Bernhardt J. Hurwood; *Count Magnus*, by M. R. James; *The Purple Terror*, by Fred M. White; *The Werewolf*, by Frederick Marryat; *The Wer-Bear*, by Sir Walter Scott; *Jikininki*, by Lafcadio Hearn; *The Vampire Cat of Nabeshima*, *The Corpse at the Inn*, *The Demon Who Changed its Skin*, *The Guest and the Striges*, *A Vata-*

*nuan Cannibal Tale*, *Four Siberian Demon Tales* — adaptations from foreign literatures by B.J.H.; *An Irish Vampire*, by R. S. Breen; *Peter Kurten — the Monster of Dusseldorf*, by Bernhardt J. Hurwood; *The Were-Tiger*, by Sir Hugh Clifford; *Johannes Cuntius, A Citizen of Pentsch*, by Henry More, *Sawney Beane*, *The Man Eater of Eastlothian*, by Captain Charles Johnson, and *Stubbe Peeter*, adapted by B.J.H.

I haven't read them all; but those I have read are quite good; this, added to the artistic merit of the volume as a whole, makes me confident that you will find it well worth risking half a dollar for. RAWL

We have had a number of requests

for *Sredni Vashtar*, by Saki; so I had better tell you that this story is included in the Ballantine softcover collection, *Tales to be Told in the Dark*, Edited by Basil Davenport. Also in this volume, which sells for 50c, are: *The Beast with Five Fingers*, by W. F. Harvey; *By One, by Two, and by Three*, by Stephen Hall; *The Two Bottles of Relish*, by Lord Dunsany; *The Book*, by Margaret Irwin; *Thus I Refute Beelzy*, by John Collier; *Mufina*, by Lafcadio Hearn; *The Open Window*, by Saki; *Two Anecdotes*, Anonymous; and *The Closed Cabinet*, Anonymous. The anthologist, Mr. Davenport, has an opening essay "On Telling Stories", and has written a brief introduction to each item. RAWL

Jack L. Chalker, publisher of the fine amateur magazine *MIRAGE*, from which we drew *Master Nicholas*, has issued a special booklet, *Mirage On Lovecraft*, in collaboration with Mark Owings, 46 letter-size pages neatly duplicated, with an attractive cover.

The contents are for the thorough Lovecraftian, who became enamored of HPL too late to obtain such items as the Arkham House *Beyond the Wall of Sleep* and *Marginalia*, before they went out of print and began to draw fantastic prices. Contents are:

*Some Notes on a Nonentity* (HPL's autobiographical sketch), annotated by August Derleth; *Notes on the Writing of Weird Fiction*, and *Some Notes on Interplanetary Fiction*, by HPL; *Notes on Lovecraft*, by David H. Keller (not to be confused with *Shadows Over Lovecraft*, by Keller, a completely different article); *A Rebuttal to Lovecraft Criticism*, by August Derleth; *And a Conclusion that Isn't*, by Jack L. Chalker; and *The Books of H. P. Lovecraft: A Checklist*, by Chalker.

Mr. Chalker's address is 5111 Liberty Heights Avenue, Baltimore, Maryland 21207, and the price on this booklet is \$2.50.

# Memories of H. P. L.

*by Muriel E. Eddy*

If Howard Phillips Lovecraft were alive, he would have observed his 75th birthday on August 20, 1965. He was born in 1890, in the days of the horse and carriage. As a young boy, he rode a bicycle, but he never cared for the automobile age. And his fiction was of eons that did not exist, created out of night walks he took frequently since he did not like the daylight.

He was highly intelligent, self-educated, and a solitary person. He liked best to be alone, although he enjoyed the company of other writers — especially those to whom he could lend a helping hand with the revision of manuscripts.

His craft has been recognized in recent years to be singular in its excellence. No one has ever quite equalled his ability to put the reader in the place of

the story teller, and to experience the same dread and fears and nameless horrors.

He was a fine man, and a true gentleman of the old school. He lived on the East Side of Providence, which has always been linked with the upper classes of society. His parents died while he was young, and he lived with two aunts who were quite comfortably fixed.

He liked cats, ice cream, and visits to rural areas of Rhode Island. He used real names of places and streets, but his historical facts were the creation of a legendary world so well-known in his writings.

Lovecraft died on March 15, 1937 of what was thought at the time to be a kidney ailment. He left copious notes on his illness for his doctors to analyze after his demise. His grave is

in the family burial plot in Swan Point Cemetery on the East Side of Providence.

We met H.P.L. as he liked to be called, in August, 1923, after months of correspondence. He was immaculate, though conservatively dressed. He wore a neat gray suit, white shirt, black necktie, and a Panama straw hat.

His hair was as dark as a raven's wing, and meticulously parted on the side. He wore spectacles, and behind them his eyes were gentle and brown. He extended lean white fingers in a typical Lovecraftian gesture, and we shook hands with

a man destined by Fate to become a really great writer of the weird and macabre!

After the first meeting, our discussions of writing grew more and more interesting, and Lovecraft asked if he could come at night instead of in the daytime. So we spent many nights from 11 P.M. to 2 A.M. reading stories of horror aloud with H.P.L.

We wrote stories under Lovecraft's tutelage; we typed some of his stories; we assisted in his ghost-writing of material for the great magician, Houdini. It was a marvelous relationship, and one we shall always treasure.

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For those who are fond of old science and fantasy films, there is a fascinating collection of stills and reviews by Tom Reamy in the very well printed (offset, with good type and fine reproduction) second issue of TRUMPET, Mr. Reamy's own publication.

Discussed in this issue are *The Terror* (Karloff); *Attack of the 50 ft. Woman*; *Beast from Haunted Cave*; *Conquest of Space*; and *Paranoiac*! The contents also include *Science Fiction as Cinema*, by Al Jackson, and a tightly-thought-out criticism of Harry Bates's *Farewell to the Master*, by Alex Eisenstein, who makes a good case for his contention that this is a vastly over-rated "classic".

Tom Reamy's address is 6010 Victor, Dallas, Texas 75214, and he asks fifty cents per copy for TRUMPET or two dollars for a five issue subscription. The production job is one of the finest we've ever seen on an amateur publication, and if the contents sound interesting to you, it's a real bargain for a half dollar.

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# The Black Beast

by Henry S. Whitehead

(author of *Cassius*)

The bulk of the weird fiction written by Henry S. Whitehead appeared in *WEIRD TALES*, and most of the stories had their locale in the West Indies, where the Rev. Dr. Whitehead (a priest of the Protestant Episcopal church) had a parish for some years. In *The Eyrie* for May 1925, Editor Farnsworth Wright told the readers: "Voodoo is the basis of West Indian belief; and we sincerely hope that the Virgin Islands, our country's outpost in the West Indies, will shortly yield some of their wild beliefs to the scholarly pen of the Reverend Henry S. Whitehead, who has just returned from there. In the West Indies magic is the one touchstone to the character of the people. The obeah doctor still flourishes; the jumbie roams the canefields at night on the watch for unwary Negroes; and two of Mr. Whitehead's personal friends are popularly believed to be were-wolves!"

"I wish I could get a story of the Virgin Islands published in the local dialect, in which I preach," writes Mr. Whitehead, "but it would be virtually unintelligible to the reading public:

" 'Mon, yo' lated!' "

" 'A-wee ca' cuke tell a-wee ca' done yett, mon!' "

" 'I don't suppose there's anything quite like it on top of the earth.' "

He was greatly mourned and missed by lovers of weird fiction at his death in 1933. (He died late in 1932, but few of his readers learned about this until an announcement and brief profile appeared in the March 1933 *WT*, issued in February 1933.) Our thanks to VIC CHIDALIA, who was the first to request this story, and to LOUISE AVERY, who loaned us a copy of it.

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DIAGONALLY across the Sunday Market in Christiansted, on the island of Santa Cruz, from the house known as Old Moore's, which I occupied one season — that is to say, along the southern side of the ancient market-place of the old city, built upon the abandoned site of the yet older French town of Bassin — there stands, in faded, austere grandeur, another and much larger old house known as Gannett's. For close to half a century Gannett House stood vacant and idle, its solid masonry front along the market-place presenting a forlorn and aloof appearance, with its rows of closely shuttered windows, its stones darkened and discolored, its whole appearance stern and forbidding.

During that fifty years or so in which it had stood shut up and frowning blankly at the mass of humanity which passed its massive bulk and its forbidding closed doors, there had been made, by various persons, efforts enough to have it opened. Such a house, one of the largest private dwellings in the West Indies, and one of the handsomest, closed up like this, and out of use, as it transpired upon serious inquiry, merely because such was the will of its arbitrary and rather mysterious absentee proprietor whom the island had not seen for a middle-aged man's lifetime, could hardly fail to appeal to prospective renters.

I know, because he has told me so, that the Rev. Fr. Richardson, of the English Church, tried to engage it as a convent for his sisters in 1926. I tried to get a season's lease on it myself, in the year when, failing to do so, I took Old Moore's instead — a house of strange shadows and generous rooms and enormous, high doorways through which, times innumerable, Old Moore himself, bearing, if report were believable, a strange burden of mental apprehension, had slunk in bygone years, in shuddering, dreadful anticipation. . . .

Inquiry at the Government offices had elicited the fact that old Lawyer Malling, a survival of the Danish regime, who lived in Christiansted and was invaluable to our Government officials when it came to disentangling antique Danish records, was in charge of Gannett's. Herr Malling, interviewed in turn, was courteous but firm. The house could not be rented under any considerations; such were his instructions — permanent instructions, filed among his records. No, it was impossible, out of the question. I recalled some dim hints I had received of an old scandal.

Over a glass of excellent sherry which hospitable Herr Malling provided, I asked various questions. The answers to these indicated that the surviving Gannetts were utterly obdurate in

the matter. They had no intention of returning. Repairs — the house was built like a fortress — had not, so far, been required. They had assigned no reason for their determination to keep their Christiansted property closed? No — and Herr Malling had no option in the matter. No, he had written before, twice; once in behalf of the rector of the English Church, just recently; also, ten, eleven years ago when a professor from Berlin, sojourning in the islands, had conceived the idea of a tropical school for tutoring purposes and had cast a thickly bespectacled eye on the old mansion. No, it was impossible.

"Well, *skaal*, Herr Canevin! Come now — another, of course! A man can not travel on one leg, you know; that is one of our sayings."

But three years after this interview with Herr Malling, the old house was opened at last. The very last remaining Gannett, it appeared, had gone to his reward, from Edinburgh, and the title had passed to younger heirs who had had no personal connection, no previous residence in the West Indies.

Herr Malling's new instructions, transmitted through an Aberdeen solicitor, were to rent the property to the best advantage, to entertain offers for its disposal in fee simple, and to estimate possible repairs and submit this estimate to Aber-

deen. I learned this some time after the instructions had been transmitted. Herr Malling was not one to broadcast the private and confidential business of his clients. I learned thereof from Mrs. Ashton Garde, over tea and small cakes in the vast, magnificent drawing room of Gannett's, a swept and garnished Gannett's which she had taken for the season and whose eighteenth century mahogany she had augmented and lightened with various furniture of her own in the process which had transformed the old fortress-like abode into one of the most attractive residences I have ever been privileged to visit.

MRS. GARDE, an American, and a widow, was in the late forties, a very charming and delightful woman of the world, an accomplished hostess, incidentally a person of substantial means, and the mother of three children. Of these, a married daughter lived in Florida and did not visit the Gardes during their winter in Santa Cruz. The other children, Edward, just out of Harvard, and Lucretia, twenty-four, were with their mother. Both of them, though diversely — Edward, an athlete, had no particular conversation — had inherited the maternal charm as well as the very striking good looks of their late father whose portrait — a splendid Sargent — hung over one of the two

massive marble mantelpieces which stood at either end of the great drawing room.

It was quite near the end where the portrait hung, low because the mantelshelf, lacking a fireplace under it, stood two feet higher than an ordinary mantelshelf, balancing a ceiling fifteen feet in height, that we sat upon my first visit to the Gardes, and I noticed that Mrs. Garde, whose tea table was centered on the mantelpiece, as it were, and who sat facing me across the room's width, glanced up, presumably at the portrait, several times.

I am of an analytical mentality, even in small matters. I guessed that she was trying out the recent hanging of this very magnificent portrait "with her eyes," as people do until they have become accustomed to new placements and the environmental aspects of a new or temporary home and, my attention thus drawn to it, I made some comment upon the portrait, and rose to examine it more closely. It repaid scrutiny.

But Mrs. Garde, as though with a slight note of deprecation, turned the conversation away from the portrait, a fact which I noticed in passing, and which was emphasized, as I thought of it later, by her sidelong glances, upward and to her right, in the intervals of pouring tea for a considerable group of company, which kept going up

there again and again. I gave to these facts no particular interpretation. There was no reason for analysis. But I noted them nevertheless.

I saw considerable of the Gardes, for the next few weeks, and then, because I had planned some time before to go down the islands as far as Martinique when the *Margaret* of the Bull-Insular Line which plies among the upper islands should go there for several days' sojourn in drydock, I did not see them at all for more than two weeks during which I was renewing my acquaintance with Martinique French in the interesting capital town of Fort de France.

I ran in to call on the Gardes shortly after my arrival on Santa Cruz at the conclusion of this trip, and found Mrs. Garde alone. Edward and Lucretia were playing tennis and later dining with the Covingtons at Hermon Hill Estate House.

I was immediately struck with the change which had taken place in Mrs. Garde. It was as though some process of infinite weariness had laid its hold upon her. She looked shrunken, almost fragile. Her eyes, of that dark, brilliant type which accompanies a bistre complexion, appeared enormous, and as she looked at me, her glances alternating with the many which she kept casting up there in the direction of her husband's portrait, I could not escape the



conviction that her expression bore now that aspect which I can only describe by the somewhat trite term "haunted".

I was, sharply, immediately, surprised; greatly intrigued by this phenomenon. It was one of those obvious things which strike one directly without palliation, like a blow in the face unexpectedly delivered; an unmistakable change, hinting, somehow, of tragedy. It made me instantaneously uneasy, moved me profoundly, for I had liked Mrs. Garde very much indeed, and had anticipated a very delightful acquaintance with this family which centered about its head. I noticed her hand quite definitely trembling as she handed me my cup of tea, and she took one of those side-long glances, up and to the right, in the very midst of that hospitable motion.

I drank half my tea in a mutual silence, and then, looking at Mrs. Garde, I surprised her in the middle of another glance. She was just withdrawing her eyes. She caught my eyes, and, perhaps, something of the solicitude which I was feeling strongly at the moment, and her somberly pallid face flushed slightly. She looked down, busied herself with the paraphernalia of her circular tea tray. I spoke then.

"Haven't you been entirely well, Mrs. Garde? It seemed to me that, perhaps, you were not

looking altogether robust, if you don't mind my mentioning it." I tried to make my tone sufficiently jocular to carry off my really solicitous inquiry lightly; to leave room for some rejoinder in somewhat the same vein.

She turned tragic eyes upon me. There was no smile on her drawn face. The unexpected quality of her reply brought me up standing. "Mr. Canevin — help me!" she said simply, looking straight into my eyes.

I was around the tea table in two seconds, had her shaking hands, which were as cold as lumps of ice, in mine. I held them and looked down at Mrs. Garde. "With all my heart," I said. "Tell me, please, when you can, now or later, Mrs. Garde, what it is."

She expressed her thanks for this reassurance with a nod, withdrew her hands, sat back in her rattan chair and closed her eyes. I thought she was going to faint and, sensing this, perhaps, she opened her eyes and said, "I'm quite all right, Mr. Canevin — that is, so far as the immediate present is concerned. Will you not sit down, finish your tea? Let me freshen your cup."

Somewhat relieved, I resumed my own chair and, over a second cup of tea, looked at my hostess. She had made a distinct effort to pull herself together. We sat for some minutes in silence. Then, I refusing

more tea, she rang, and the butler came in and removed the tray and placed cigarets on the table between us. It was only after the servant had gone and closed the drawing room behind himself that she leaned forward impulsively, and began to tell me what had occurred.

DESPITE HER obvious agitation and the state of her nerves which I have attempted to indicate, Mrs. Garde went straight to the point without any beating about the bush. Even as she spoke it occurred to me from the form of her phraseology that she had been planning how, precisely, to express herself. She did so now very concisely and clearly.

"Mr. Canevin," she began, "I have no doubt that you have noticed my glancing up at the wall space above this mantel. It has grown, one would say, to be a nervous habit with me. You have observed it, have you not?"

I said that I had and had supposed that the glances had been directed toward her husband's portrait.

"No," resumed Mrs. Garde, looking at me fixedly as though to keep her eyes off the place over the mantelshelf, "it is not at the picture, Mr. Canevin. It is at a place directly above it — about three feet above its top edge to be precise."

She paused at this point, and I could not help looking toward

the point she had indicated. As I did so, I caught sight of her long and rather beautiful hands. They were clamped against the edge of the low table, as though she were holding on to that as if to something solid and material — an anchor for her nerves — and I observed that the knuckles were white with the pressure she was exerting.

I saw nothing but a wide space of empty, gray sanded wall which ran up cleanly to the high ceiling and out on both sides of the portrait, a clear space, artistically left vacant, one would surmise, by whoever had possessed the good sense to leave the Sargent alone with its wide blank background of gray wall space.

I looked back at Mr. Garde and found her gaze fixed determinedly on my face. It was as though she held it there, by a sheer effort of the will, forcing herself not to look up at the wall.

I nodded at her reassuringly.

"Please continue, if you will, Mrs. Garde," I said, and leaned back in my chair and lighted a cigaret from the silver box on the table between us.

Mrs. Garde relaxed and leaned back in her lounge chair, but continued looking straight at me. When she resumed what she was saying she spoke slowly, with a certain conscious effort at deliberation. My instinct apprised me that she was forc-

ing herself to this course; that if she did not concentrate in some such fashion she would let go and scream aloud.

"Perhaps you are familiar with Du Maurier's book, *The Martian*, Mr. Canevin," and, as I nodded assent, she continued, "You will remember when Joselin's eye began to fail him, he was puzzled and dreadfully worried by discovering a blind spot in his sound eye — it was emphasized by the failure of the other one, and he was vastly distressed — thought he was going stone blind, until the little Continental oculist reassured him, explained the *punctum caecum* — the blind spot which is in the direct line of vision with the optic nerve itself. Do you recall the incident?"

"Perfectly," said I, and nodded again reassuringly.

"Well, I remember testing my own blind spots after reading that when I was quite a young girl," resumed Mrs. Garde. "I daresay a great many people tried the experiment. There is, of course, a line of vision *outside* each blind spot, to the left of the left eye's ordinary focus and, correspondingly, to the right of that of the other eye. In addition to this variation of ordinary vision, as I have ascertained, there is another condition, especially evident in the sight of the middle-aged. That is that the direct line of ordinary vision becomes, as it

were, 'worn,' and the vision itself, in the case of a person especially who has used his or her eyes a great deal — over embroidery, or reading, or some professional work which requires concentrated looking, I mean — is somewhat less acute than when the eyes are used at an unaccustomed angle."

SHE PAUSED, looked at me as though to ascertain whether or not I had been following her speech. Once more I nodded. I had listened carefully to every word. Mrs. Garde, resuming, now became acutely specific.

"As soon as we had arrived here, Mr. Canevin, the very first thing that I had to attend to was the suitable hanging of this portrait of Mr. Garde." She did not look toward it, but indicated the portrait with a gesture of her hand in its direction.

"I looked over that section of the wall space to ascertain the most advantageous point from which to hang it. I found the place that seemed to me suitable and had the butler drive in a nail in the place I indicated. The picture was then hung and is still in the place I selected.

"This process had required considerable looking, on my part, at the blank wall. It was not, really, until the portrait was actually hung that I realized — that it occurred to me — that something — something, Mr. Canevin, which had gradually

become clearer, better defined I mean, was there — above the picture — something which, within that outside angle of vision, outside the blind spot of my right eye as I sat there and looked up and to the right, became more evident every time I looked up at the wall. Of course, I looked at the picture many times, to make quite sure I had it in the right spot on the wall. In doing so the outside vision, the portion of the eye which was not worn and more or less dimmed from general usage, took in the place I have indicated. It is, as I have mentioned, about three feet above the top of Mr. Garde's portrait.

"Mr. Canevin, the thing has grown — *grown!*"

Suddenly Mrs. Garde broke down, buried her face in trembling hands, leaning forward upon the table like a child hiding its eyes in a game, and her slim body shook with uncontrollable, dry sobs.

This time, I perceived, the best thing for me to do was to sit quietly and wait until the poor, overwrought lady had exhausted her hysterical seizure. I waited, therefore, in perfect silence, trying, mentally, to give my hostess, as well as I could, the assurance of my complete sympathy and my desire and willingness to help her in all possible ways.

Gradually, as I had anticipated, the spasm of weep-

ing worked itself out, minimized itself and finally passed. Mrs. Garde raised her head, composed herself, again looked at me, this time with a markedly greater degree of calmness and self-possession. The gust of hysteria, although it had shaken her, had, in its ordinary effect, done her good. She even smiled at me a little wanly.

"I fear that you will think me very weak, Mr. Canevin," she said finally.

I smiled quietly. "When it is possible, it would be of assistance if I could know of this matter as exactly as possible," I said. "Try, please, to tell me just what it is that you see on the wall, Mrs. Garde."

Mrs. Garde nodded, spent a little while composing herself. She even used her vanity box, a trifling gold affair with the inevitable mirror. After this she was able to smile herself. Then, suddenly quite serious again, she said simply, "It is the head and part of the body — the upper, forward part, to be precise, Mr. Canevin — of what seems to be a young bull. At first only the head; then, gradually, the shoulders and neck. It seems quite utterly grotesque, absurd, does it not?"

"But, Mr. Canevin, extraordinary as that must seem to you, it is —" she looked down at her twitching hands, then, with a visible effort, back at me, her face now suddenly ghastly un-

der the fresh make-up which she had so recently applied to it. "Mr. Canevin, that is not the terrifying part of it. That, indeed, might, perhaps, be construed as some kind of optical illusion, or something of the sort. It is —" again she hesitated, looked down; then, with a greater effort than before back at me — "it is the — expression — of the face, Mr. Canevin! It is, I assure you, quite *human*, terrifying, reproachful! And, Mr. Canevin, there is blood, a thick single stream of blood, which runs down from the center of the forehead, over the creature's poor nose! It is — somehow, pathetic, Mr. Canevin. It is a very frightful experience to have. It has utterly ruined my peace of mind. That is all there is to it, Mr. Canevin — the head and neck and shoulders of a young bull, with that blood running down from its forehead, and that expression . . ."

At once, upon hearing this salient particularization of Mrs. Garde's extraordinary optical experience, that analytical faculty of mine began forthwith to run riot. There were points of contact with previous knowledge of the spectral beliefs of the blacks and similar phenomena of our West Indies in that picture, affairs wherein I am not wholly without experience. The bull, as at once it occurred to me, is the principal sacrificial animal of the main voodoo cults,

up and down the islands, wherever the 'old African gods of "Guinea" prevail.

But a bull, with such an expression on its face as my hostess had briefly described, with blood running down its nose, up there on the wall space above the high mantelshelf in Gannett House — this was, truly, a puzzler! I shifted, I remember, forward in my chair, raised a hand to command Mrs. Garde's attention. I had thought of something.

"Tell me, if you please, Mrs. Garde," said I. "Is the appearance which you have described close against the wall, or — otherwise?"

"It is well out from the wall itself," replied Mrs. Garde, striving to express herself with precision. "It seems, I should say, to be several feet away from the wall proper, toward us, of course — not as though *behind* the wall, I mean — and, I omitted to say, Mr. Canevin, that when I look at it for any considerable length of time, the head and shoulders seem to sag forward and downward. It is, I should say, as though the animal were just freshly hurt, were beginning to sink down to its death."

"Thank you," said I. "It must have been a considerable ordeal to tell me about it so clearly and exactly. However, it is very simple psychology to understand that the process has done you

good. You have shared your strange experience with some one else. That, of course, is a step in the right direction. Now, Mrs. Garde, will you permit me to 'prescribe' for you?"

"Most assuredly, Mr. Canevin," returned Mrs. Garde. "I am, frankly, in such a state over this dreadful thing, that I am prepared to do anything to secure some relief from it. I have not, of course, mentioned it to my children. I have not said a word to anybody but you. It is not the sort of thing one can discuss — with anybody and everybody."

I bowed across the table at this implied compliment, this expression of confidence in me, after all, the most casual of Mrs. Garde's acquaintances.

"I suggest," said I, "that the entire Garde family take an excursion down the islands, like the one from which I have just returned. The *Samaria*, of the Cunard Line, will be at St. Thomas on Thursday. Today is Monday. It would be quite a simple matter to make your reservations by wireless, or even by cable to St. Thomas. Go away for two or three weeks; come back when you are ready. And leave me the key of Gannett House, Mrs. Garde."

My hostess nodded. She had listened avidly to this suggestion. "I will do so, Mr. Canevin. I think there will be no argument from Edward and Lucre-

tia. They were, as a matter of fact, envying you your visit to Martinique."

"Good," said I encouragingly. "We may call that settled then. I might add that the *Grebe* is going back to St. Thomas tomorrow morning. It would be an excellent idea for you to go along. I will telephone the dispatching secretary at once for the permission, and consult Dr. Pelletier who is chief municipal physician there. He has a broad mind and a large experience of affairs such as this."

Again Mrs. Garde nodded acquiescently. She had reached, it was obvious, the place where she would carry out any intelligent suggestion to the end of terminating that optical horror of hers.

THE GARDE FAMILY left on board the little Government transport, which runs between our Virgin Islands and from them to and from Porto Rico, at eight o'clock the following morning. I saw them off at the Christiansted wharf, and the following afternoon a wireless from St. Thomas apprised me that Dr. Pelletier had proved very helpful, and that reservations for a three weeks' cruise about the islands had been secured for all three of them on board the Cunarder.

I breathed easily, for the first time. I had assumed a fairly considerable responsibility in my

advice. I was now, for some three weeks, lord of the manor at Gannett House. I arranged, through Mrs. Garde's butler, a white man whom she had brought with her, to give the house servants a day's vacation for a picnic — a common form of pleasure seeking among West Indian blacks — and requested him, quoting Mrs. Garde's desire — she had given me *carte blanche* in the entire affair — to take the same day off himself, or even two days. He could, I pointed out, go over to St. Thomas on the next trip of the *Grebe* and come back the following day. There would be much to see in St. Thomas with its fine shops.

The butler made this arrangement without any demur, and I called on Fr. Richardson, rector of the English Church. Fr. Richardson, to whom I told the whole story, did no more than nod his wise West Indian head. He had spent a priestly lifetime combating the "stupidness" of the blacks. He knew precisely what to do, without any further suggestions from me.

On the day when the servants were all away from Gannett House, Fr. Richardson came with his black bag and exorcised the house from top to bottom, repeating his formulas and casting his holy water in room after room of the great old mansion. Then, gravely accepting the twenty-franc note which I

handed him for his poor, and blessing me, the good and austere priest departed, his services just rendered being to him, I daresay, the merest routine of a day's work.

I breathed easier now. God, as even the inveterate voodooists of Snake-ridden Haiti admit in their holy week practises — when every altar of the Snake is stripped of its vile symbols, these laid face downward on the floors, covered with rushes, and the crucifix placed on the altars — God is infinitely more powerful than even the mighty Snake of Guinea with his attendant demigods! I believe in being on the safe side.

After this, I merely waited until Mrs. Garde's return. Every few days I ran in and spoke with Robertson the butler. Otherwise I left the healing air of the sea to do its work of restoration on Mrs. Garde, confident that after her return, refreshed by the change, there would be no recurrence of her horror.

The thing was a problem, and a knotty one, from my viewpoint. I should not rest, I was fully aware, until, by hook or crook, I had satisfied myself about the background for the strange appearance which that lady had recounted to me across her tea table. In the course of the cogitations, wherein I exhausted my own fund of West Indian occult lore, I remembered old Lawyer Mallings. There was

a possible holder of clues! I have briefly alluded to what I might call a vague penumbra of some ancient scandal hanging about Gannett's. If there existed any real background for this, and anybody now alive knew the facts, it would be Herr Malling. He had passed his eightieth birthday. He had been personally acquainted, in his young manhood, with Angus Gannett, the last of that family to reside here. He had had charge of the property for a lifetime.

TO OLD MALLING'S, therefore, after due cogitation as to how I should present such a matter to that conservative ancient, I betook myself.

Herr Malling received me with that Old World courtesy which makes a formal occasion out of the most commonplace visit. He produced his excellent sherry. He even used the formula, "To what, Mr. Canevin, am I indebted for the honor of this most welcome visit?" Only he said "dis" for "this," being a Danish West Indian.

After chatting of various local matters which were engaging the attention of the island at the moment, I delicately broached the subject upon which I had come.

I will attempt no full account of the fencing which led up to the main aspect of that conversation. Likewise the rather long

impasse which promptly built itself up between this conservative old solicitor and myself. I could see, clearly enough, his viewpoint. This cautious questioning of mine had to do with the sacred affairs of an old client. Policy dictated silence; courteous silence; silence surrounded and softened by various polite remarks of palliative nature; silence, nevertheless, as definite as the solitudes of Quintana Roo in the midst of the Yucatan jungles.

But there was a key word. I had saved it up, probably subconsciously, possibly by design; a design based on instinct. I had mentioned no particulars of Mrs. Garde's actual account; that is, I had said nothing of the nature and quality of that which had been distressing her. At last, baffled at all points by the old gentleman's crusted conservatism, I sprung my possible bombshell. It worked!

It was that word "bull" which formed the key. When I had reached that far in my account of what Mrs. Garde had seen over the mantelshelf in Gannett House, and brought out that word, I thought, for an instant, that the old gentleman, who had gone quite white, with blue about his ancient lips, was going to faint.

He did not faint, however. With something almost like haste he poured himself out a glass of his good sherry, drank



it with an almost steady hand, set down the glass, turned to me and remarked, "Wait!"

I waited while the old fellow pottered out of his own hall, and listened to the *pat-pat-pat* of his carpet slippers as he went in search of something. He came back, looking quite as I had always seen him, his cheeks their usual apple red, the benignant smile of a blameless old age again triumphant on his old lips. He set down an old-fashioned cardboard filing case on the mahogany table beside the sherry decanter, looked over to me, nodded wisely and proceeded to open the filing case.

From this he took a thing somewhat like a large, old-fashioned gentleman's wallet, which proved to be the binding placed by old school lawyers about particular documents, and unfolding this, and glancing at the heading of its contents, and once again nodding, this time to himself, Herr Malling handed the document, with a courteous bow, to me.

I took it, and listened to what the old gentleman was saying, while I examined it superficially. It consisted of many sheets of old-fashioned, ruled foolscap, the kind of paper I have seen used for very old plantation accounts. I held it in my hand expectantly while Herr Malling talked.

"Mr. Canevin," he was saying, "I giff you dis, my friend,

because it contain de explanation of what haff puzzled you — naturally. It iss de account of precisely what hov happen in Gannett's, de Autumn of de year 1876, when Herr Angus Gannett, de late owner, haff jus' retorn from de United States where he haff been wisiting his relatives an' attending de Centennial Exposition at Philadelphia.

"I t'ink you foind, sir, dis document, dis personal account, explain all t'ings now impossible to — er — grasp! I feel free to giff it to you to — er — peruse, because de writer iss dead. I am bound, as you will observe — er — upon perusal, solely by the tenure off life in de testator — er — de narrator, I should say. Dis iss not a will; it iss merely a statement. You will, I imagine, sir, find dis of some interest. I did!"

With a bow to Herr Malling for his great courtesy, I proceeded to read.

## II

Gannett House,  
Christiansted, D. W. I.

October 25th, 1876

My very good friend and brother,  
Rudolf Malling:

This will serve as instructions for you in the affair of the conduct of my property, the town residence on the south side of the Sunday Market which I herewith, for purposes of custodial administration, place in your care. It is my purpose, on

the twenty-ninth of this month, to take ship for England, thence direct to the City of Edinburgh; where my permanent address is to be No. 19, MacKinstrie's Lane, off Clarges Street, Edinburgh, Scotland. To this address all communications of every kind and sort whatsoever are to be addressed, both personal and concerning the property if need therefor should arise.

I direct and instruct that the house shall be closed permanently upon my departure, and so maintained permanently, the same being in your charge, and the statement of your outlay for this purpose of closing the house fast remitted to me at Edinburgh.

An explanation is due you, as I clearly perceive, for this apparently abrupt decision. I will proceed to make it herewith.

To do so I bind you to complete secrecy during the term of my natural life on the basis as of \*\*\*\*\* s'p — which, as a Bro. Freemason you will recognize, of course, even though thus informally given you, and keep my confidence as hereinafter follows strict and close as of the Craft.

I will begin, then, by reminding you of what you already know, to wit, that after the death of my mother, Jane Alicia MacMurtrie Gannett, my father, the late Fergus Gannett, Esq., caused me as well as his kin-

folk in Scotland a vast and deep grief by resorting to that which has been the curse of numerous Caucasian gentlefolk as well as of many of the baser sort throughout the length and breadth of the West India Islands. In short, my father entered upon a liaison with one Angelica Kofloed, a mulatress attached to our household and had been the personal attendant of my late mother. This occurred in the year 1857.

As is also well known to you, a son was born of this union; and also my father, who, according to the law of the Danish West Indies, could have discharged his legal obligation by the payment of the sum of four hundred dollars to the mother, chose, instead, in the infatuation of which he appeared possessed, to acknowledge this son and, by due process of our legal code, to legitimize him.

I was a little past my tenth birthday when the child later known as Otto Andreas Gannett was born, here in our old home where I write this. Thereafter my father ceased all relationship with the woman Angelica Kofloed, pensioned her and, shortly after her child was weaned, caused her, the pension being continued and assured her for the term of her natural life, to emigrate to the Island of St. Vincent, of which place she was a native.

My legal half-brother, Otto

Andreas Cannett, was retained, with a nurse, in our residence, and grew to young manhood under our roof as a member of the family. I may say here that it is more possible that I should have been able to overcome my loathing and repugnance toward my half-brother had it not been that his character, as he developed from childhood into boyhood and from boyhood into youth, was such as definitely to preclude such an attitude.

I WILL BE explicit to the extent of saying plainly that Otto Andreas "took after" the negro side of his blood heritage, although his mother was but an octoroon, no more than slightly "scorched of the blood," and appearing, like my half-brother, to be a Caucasian. I would not be misunderstood in this. I am very well aware that many of our worthiest citizens here in the West India Islands are of this mixed blood. It is a vexed and somewhat delicate question at best, at least here in our islands. Suffice it to say that the worst negro characteristics came out as Otto Andreas grew into young manhood. He bears today and doubtless will continue long to bear, an evil reputation, even among the blacks of this island; a reputation for wicked and lecherous inclination, a bad choice of low companions, a self-centered and egotistical demeanor and, worst of

all, an incurable inclination toward the wicked and stupid practises of the blacks, with whom, to the shame of our house, he had consorted much before his death in the Autumn of this year, 1876. I refer to what is known as *obeah*.

It is especially in this last mentioned particular that I found it impossible to countenance him. Fortunately my father departed this life five years ago, before this dreadful inclination toward the powers of the Evil One had sufficiently made themselves manifest in Otto Andreas to draw thereto my father's failing attention. I thank my God for that He was pleased to take my father away before he had that cross to bear.

I will not particularize further than to say that the cumulation of these bad attributes in my half-brother formed the determining cause for my departure for the United States, May second, in this year, 1876. As you are aware, I left Otto Andreas here, with strict adjurations as to his conduct and, thinking to escape from continuous contact with him, which had grown unbearably hateful to me, went to New York, thence to the city of Philadelphia where I attended the Centennial Exposition in the hope of somewhat distracting my mind and, later, before returning toward the beginning of October, visited various of our kinfolk in

the States of Maryland and Virginia.

I arrived on this island, sailing from New York via Porto Rico, on the nineteenth of October, landing at West-End and remaining overnight at the residence of our friend, Herr Mulgrav, the Judge of the Frederiksted Reconciling Court, and, through the courtesy of the Reverend Dr. Dubois of the West-End English Church, who very considerably loaned me his carriage and horses, drove the seventeen miles to Christiansted the following morning.

I arrived just before breakfast time, about a quarter before one o'clock P. M.

I will be explicit to inform you, my good friend and brother, that I had not been so futile minded as to anticipate that my long absence in America would have anything like a corrective effect upon my half-brother. Indeed I was not far from anticipating that I should have to face new rascalities, new stupidities upon his part, perpetrated in my absence from home. I anticipated, indeed, that my homecoming would be anything but a pleasant experience, for of such presage I had, in truth, ample background on which to base such an opinion. I arrived at my house, therefore, in anything but a cheerful frame of mind. I had gone away to secure some respite. I came home to meet I knew not what.

No man in his senses — I say it deliberately, for the purpose of warning you, my friend, as you proceed to read what I am about to write — however, could have anticipated what I did meet! I had, indeed, something like a warning of untowardness at home, on my way across the island from Frederiksted. You know how our island blacks show plainly on their faces what their inmost thoughts are, in some instances; how inscrutable they can be in other affairs. As I passed black people on the road, or in the estate fields, I observed nothing on the faces of those who recognized me save a certain commiseration. Murmurs came to my ears, indeed, from their mouths, as one or another murmured, "Poor young marster!" Or such remarks as "Ooh, Gahd, him comin' to trouble an' calamity!"

This, of course, was the opposite of reassuring; yet I was not surprised. I had, you will remember, anticipated trouble, with Otto Andreas as its cause and root.

I will not dissemble that I expected something, as I have remarked, untoward.

I ENTERED A strangely silent house — the first thing that came to me was a most outrageous smell! You are surprised, doubtless, at such a statement. I record the facts. My nostrils were instantaneously assailed,

so soon as I had myself opened the door and stepped within, leaving Dr. Dubois' coachman, Jens, to bring in my hand luggage, with a foul odor comparable to nothing less wretched than a cattle pen!

I say to you that it fairly took me by the throat. I called to the servants as soon as I was within, leaving the door open behind me to facilitate Jens with my bags, and to let out some of that vile stench. I called Herman, the butler, and Josephine and Marianna, maids in the household. I even called out to Amaranth Niles, the cook. At the sound of my voice — the servants had not known of my arrival the night before — Herman and Marianna came running, their faces blank and stupid, in the fashion well known to you when our blacks have something to conceal.

I ordered them to take my bags to my bedroom, turned to give Jens the coachman a gratuity for his trouble, and turned back again to find Josephine staring at me through a doorway. The other two had disappeared by this time with my hand luggage. The rest, the trunks and so forth, heavier articles, were to be sent over from Frederiksted that afternoon by a carter.

"What is this frightful smell, Josephine?" I inquired. "The whole house is like a cattle pen,

my girl. What has happened? Come now, tell me!"

The black girl stood in the doorway, her face quite inscrutable, and wrung her two hands together. "Ooh, Gahd, sar, me cah'n't say," she replied with that peculiarly irritating false stupidity which they can assume at will.

I said nothing, I did not wish to inaugurate my homecoming with any fault findings. Besides, the horrible smell might very well not be this girl's fault. I stepped to the left along the inner gallery and into the hall\* though the entrance door, which was shut. I opened it, and stepped in, I say.

My dear friend Malling, prepare yourself. You will be — well — surprised, to put the matter conservatively.

There, in the center of the hall, its neck turned about so as to look toward whoever had just opened the door from the inner gallery, in this case, myself — stood a young, coal black bullock!

Beside it, on the floor in the middle of the Bokhara rug which my grandfather had brought with him back from his voyage to Turkestan in the year 1837, there was a crate, half filled with fresh grass and carrots; and nearby, and also on the rug,

\* A West Indian drawing room is commonly called the hall.

stood a large bucket of water. Wisps of the grass hung from the bullock's mouth as it stared at me for all the world as though to remark, "Who is this who intrudes, forsooth, upon my privacy here!"

MALLING, I LET myself go then. This — a bullock in my hall, in my town house! — this was too much! I rushed back into the gallery crying out for the servants, for Herman and Josephine and Marianna. They came, looking down at me, fearfully, over the balusters of the stairway, their faces gray with fear. I cursed them roundly, as you may well imagine. I conceive that even the godly Dr. Dubois himself would at least feel the desire so to express himself were he to return to his rectory and find a bullock stabled in his choicest room!

But all my words elicited nothing save that look of blank stupidity to which I have already referred; and when, in the midst of my diatribe, old Amaranth Niles, the cook, came hastening upon the scene from her kitchen, a long spoon in her fat old hand, she, who had been with us since my birth twenty-eight years before, likewise went stupid.

Suddenly I ceased reviling them for ingrates, for fools, for rascallions, for gallows birds. It occurred to me, very shortly, that this rascality was none,

could be none, of theirs, poor creatures. It was the latest devilment of my half-brother Otto Andreas. I saw it clearly. I collected myself. I addressed poor Herman in a milder tone.

"Come Herman, get this beast out of the house immediately!" I pointed toward the now open door into the hall.

But Herman, despite this definite command of mine, never stirred. His face became an ashen hue and he looked at me imploringly. Then, slowly, his hands raised up above his head and he stood there on the stairway looking fearfully over the baluster, he cried out, tremblingly; "I cyan't, sar, fore the good God an' help me de Lord — I cyan't dislodge de animal!"

I looked back at Herman with a certain degree of calmness. I addressed the man. "Where is Mr. Otto Andreas?"

At this simple query both maids on the stairs began to weep aloud, and old Amaranth Niles, the cook, who had been staring, pop-eyed and silent through the doorway, turned with an unexpected agility and fled back to her kitchen. Herman, if possible, became a full shade paler. Unsteadily the man forced himself to come down the stairs, holding rigidly by the baluster. He turned and stepped toward me, his face gray and working and the beads of sweat standing thickly and heavily on his forehead. He

dropped upon his knees before me there on the gallery floor and, his hands held up above his head, cried out; "Him dead, sar, from day before yestiddy, sar — it de troof, me marster!"

I will confess to you, Mallng, that the gallery reeled about me at this wholly unexpected news. Nobody had told me the night before. Just possibly my hosts had not been aware of it. Another question presented itself to my tottering mind, a question the answer to which would clear up that matter of not being told.

"What time did he die, Herman?" I managed to articulate. I was holding on by the baluster myself now.

"Late, sar," returned Herman, still on his knees, and swaying backward and forward. "P'rops two hour after midnight, sar. Him bury de nex' day, sar, dat am to say 'twas yestiddy afternoon, two o'clock, me marster. De body ain' keep good, sar, an' 'sides, all we ain' made sensible of your arrival, sar."

So that was why the Mullgravs had not told me. They simply had not known of my half-brother's death, would not know until today in the ordinary course of events, at that distance from Christiansted.

MY FIRST REACTION, I will admit, was one of profound relief.

Otto Andreas would never —

I confess to have thought — trouble me again; would not, indeed, again trouble any one with his shortcomings, his arrogance, his manifold evil habits, his villainies. I was premature . . .

Then, almost mechanically, I suppose, my mind turned to that shambles in my hall, that barnyard beast stabled there, the priceless rug sodden with its filth. I turned to Herman and spoke.

"Get up, Herman! Stand up, man! There is no occasion for you to act in this fashion. I was, naturally, very much annoyed at the animal being in the hall. I am, in fact, still vexed about it. Tell me —" as the man rose to his feet and stood trembling before me — "who placed it there, and why has it not been removed?"

At this Herman visibly shook from head to foot, and again his dark visage, which had been somewhat restored to its wonted coloration, turned gray with fright. I sensed somehow that he was less frightened at me than at something else. I am, of course, accustomed to the peculiarities of our Negroes. I spoke to him again, very gently, voicing my previous idea which had stayed my first great anger.

"Did Mr. Otto Andreas place the animal there?"

Herman, apparently not trust-

ing himself to speak, nodded his head at me.

"Come now, man, get it out quickly!" I commanded.

Again, to my profound annoyance, Herman fell on his knees before me, mumbled abjectly his statement of inability to carry out my orders.

I struggled with myself to be patient. I had been, I conceived, rather sorely tried. I took Herman by the shoulder, drew him to his feet, walked him, unresisting, along the gallery and into my office. I closed the door behind us and sat down at my work table where I do my accounts and write — where I am now writing this to you. Herman, I perceived, was still trembling. There was something in this which I was — so far — unable to fathom.

"Go and bring me some rum and two tumblers, Herman," I ordered, still forcing myself to speak gently, calmly. Herman left the room in silence. I sat there waiting for him to come back, intensely puzzled. The bullock, it seemed to me, could wait. By the indications it had been there for a full day or more. The odor was, even here with the door closed, almost unbearable.

Herman returned and set down the rum and the tumblers. I poured out a stiff tot and a smaller one for myself. I drank off my rum and then handed the other tumbler to Herman.

"Drink this, Herman," I ordered him, "and then sit down there. I wish to speak with you very seriously."

Herman gulped the rum, his eyes rolling and, when I had repeated my command, seated himself uneasily on the extreme edge of the chair I had indicated. I looked at him. Fetching and drinking the rum had somewhat helped his agitation. He was no longer visibly trembling.

"Listen to me, now, man," said I. "I beg you to tell me, plainly and without equivocation, why is it that you have not taken that bullock out of the hall. That I must know. Come now, tell me, man!"

Once again Herman literally threw himself at my feet and groveled there. He murmured, "I is beg yo' to believe, me marster, dat I can not do, sar."

This was too much. I threw my restraint to the winds, caught the black rascal by the neck, hauled him to his feet shook him soundly, slapped him on both sides of the face. He was unresistant, quite limp in my grasp, poor old fellow.

"You will tell me," I threatened him, "or, by Caesar, I'll break every bone in your damned worthless black body! Come now, at once and no more of this intolerable stupidity!"

HERMAN STIFFENED. He



leaned forward, whispered, tremblingly, in my ear. He did not dare, it seemed, to mention the name he had on his tongue aloud. He told me that Pap' Joseph, their devilish black *papalot*, as they name him, their witch-doctor, had been the cause of the bullock's remaining in the hall. Furthermore, now that he was started on his confession, he told me that my half-brother had had that filthy wretch staying in the house — can you imagine it, Malling? — for several days before his sudden death; that the two had made elaborate arrangements, there in the hall, for some filthy *obeah* which they were planning between them; that the bullock had been introduced three days ago; other detail which would be here superfluous, and, finally, that as nearly as he — not a witness of whatever necromancy or sorcery they were working among them — there had been various other blacks on the scene in my hall besides those two — could estimate the matter, Otto Andreas had died, very suddenly and unexpectedly, *in the midst of their incantations*, and that Pap' Joseph himself had given him, Herman, the strictest orders not to remove the bullock from the hall upon any pretext whatsoever until he, Pap' Joseph, should come to take the animal away in person. It was to

be watered, fed — hence the bucket and the trough of green food — but not otherwise to be interfered with in any manner whatsoever.

That, of course, explained much; but knowing why poor old Herman had balked at answering my previous questions did not help the affair greatly. The disgusting creature was still, as it were, pastured in my hall. It was inexplicable — why the witch-doctor had issued such ridiculous orders; I mean to say, because to understand that, one would have to be familiar with the inner workings of their incantations and similar stupidity. However, I saw clearly that Herman could not, being under such pressure of fear — they all dread this Joseph like pestilence or the Evil Fiend himself — do anything by way of removing the animal. I sent him out, and stepped along the gallery and again into the hall.

Here, for the first time, I perceived what my complete stultification upon seeing that bullock calmly occupying my hall on my first visit had prevented my noticing before. At the east end of the hall, a large, strong platform of boards, approached from the side by a ramp or inclined plane, had been solidly built against the wall, at the same height as the marble mantelshef. Indeed, the platform, which was about

twelve feet square, was an extension into the room of the mantelshelf itself. I knew, and you know, of course, what that had involved. The platform was a "high" altar of voodoo. Some very elaborate rites of the higher manifestations of their horrible practices had been planned here. I was dry mouthed with pure indignation. The son of my father, Fergus Gannett, even by a person of color, lending himself to that, taking willing part in such atrocious villainy!

I saw that I should have to secure a rope to remove the bullock, which was entirely free, and now standing looking out of one of the windows without so much as a halter on its head. I walked out of the room, closing the door behind me, and as I was about to call Herman to fetch me a rope it occurred to me that I would do well to procure some help. I could not, you see, lead such an animal out of my house on to the public road. It would be a most ridiculous sight and would mark me for years as a subject for derisive conversation among the blacks of the town, indeed of the entire island. I called to Herman, therefore, but when he came in answer to this summons I demanded, not a rope, but the carriage and, when that appeared ten minutes later, I or-

dered Herman to drive me out to Macartney House.

Yes, I had made up my mind, even to the extent of taking Macartney some ways into my confidence, that I would do wisely to have him along. For one thing, he has many cattle. Macartney handing over a bullock — it could be led out through a back passage and into the house yard — over to one of his farm laborers would not excite any comment at all in the town.

I thought better and better of this decision during the ten minute drive to Macartney's, and when I arrived I found him at home and Cornelis Hansen, his son-in-law, who married Honoria, with him.

I explained no more to these gentlemen than that my eccentric late half-brother had seen fit to leave an animal in the hall shortly before his death, and that I begged their aid and countenance in getting rid of the beast, and they both came back with me.

IT WAS CLOSE upon three o'clock in the afternoon when we arrived, Macartney having brought one of his cattlemen who sat beside Herman on the box, and, taking this fellow with us, equipped with a rope and bull halter, we entered the house and walked along the inner gallery and into the hall.

Here, then, my dear Malling,

I am constrained to set down the oddest happening! The bullock, which was a young one, only half grown, was not, as it turned out, the docile, placid creature one might very well have expected.

To put the matter briefly, so soon as the creature saw us enter, and had, apparently, observed the cattleman with his halter and rope, it began to act as though it were positively possessed! It raged about the room, upsetting what furniture was there, breaking some articles, overturning others, the cattleman in hot pursuit; Macartney, Mr. Hansen and I doing our best to hem it in and head it off. Finally it took refuge, of all imaginable places, upon the board platform! Yes, it ran up the ramp and stood, at bay, its muzzle positively frothing, its nostrils distended, and a look of the most extraordinary emotion upon its heavy animal face that one could — or could not — possibly imagine.

As it stood there, and the three of us and the cattleman stood looking up at it, Macartney burst out with, "Faith, Mr. Gannett, sir, it has every appearance of humanity in its confounded eyes — the beast!"

I looked at it and felt that Macartney might almost be right! The animal had most pronouncedly upon its facial expression every indication of

unwillingness to be removed from my hall! The thing was entirely ridiculous, save only that its rushing about was going to cost me a pretty penny for the joiners work which must be done upon my broken furniture.

Macartney ordered his Negro to mount the ramp and place the halter upon the now apparently cornered beast, and he attempted to do so. He had got nearly to the top when the beast unexpectedly lowered its head and hurled the unfortunate man to the floor, breaking one of his arms between the shoulder and elbow.

At this, once more that day, I lost patience entirely. This stupidity, it seemed to me, had gone far enough. Was my half-brother and his witless knavery to follow and distress and annoy me even from beyond his grave? I decided that I would end the affair there and then.

"Attend to your poor fellow, here, Macartney," said I, "and I will return directly. You might take him out and Herman will drive him to the municipal hospital."

I left the room, walked along the inner gallery to my office, and took my pistol from the drawer of the table where I always keep it.

I came back to the hall, passing Macartney and Hansen as they carried the poor devil with

his broken arm, moaning quite piteously, out to the carriage in the roadway below.

THE PISTOL IN my hand, I approached the platform. On it the bullock was still standing. It had made no effort to descend. I walked straight down the room and stood before the platform, raised the pistol, and took careful aim at the middle of the animal's forehead. It was only just as I pressed my index finger firmly around the trigger that I caught the expression in its eyes. Then I understood fully what Macartney had meant by his remark that it looked almost "human"! If I had had time, I confess to you, Malling, I would, even then, and after all that provocation and vexatiousness, have stayed my hand. But it was too late.

The bullet struck squarely in the middle of the beast's forehead and, as it swayed on its stricken legs, a great gout of red blood ran down its soft nose and dripped upon the boards of the platform. Then, quite suddenly, its four legs gave out from under it, and it fell with a round thud on the boards, shaking the solid platform with its considerable weight, and lay still, its head projecting over the edge of the platform.

I left it lying there, the blood running over the edge and dripping on the mahogany flooring

of the hall underneath and, as I left the room in the definite certainty that I was finished with this annoyance, all but having the furniture repaired and the stinking shambles cleaned and aired, I carried with me the most extraordinary impression which suddenly grew up in my mind — the most distressful matter imaginable — a feeling which, however illogical the affair may appear to you, I feel certain I shall carry with me to the grave — *the feeling that I had gravely interfered in some truly mysterious and inexplicable fashion, with my half-brother Otto Andreas' last wishes!*

Macartney and his son-in-law were returning along the inner gallery from depositing the man in my carriage, and I took them into the dining room for some refreshment, laying the pistol on the table.

"So you shot the beast, eh?" remarked Macartney.

"Aye," I returned, "and that ends that phase of the trouble, Macartney. The wine and rum are here on the sideboard; be pleased to take your glasses, gentlemen — only, there is another side to all this on which I wish to consult you both."

We drank a tot of rum and then, the decanter and glasses on the table beside the pistol, we drew up our chairs and I opened to these gentlemen the affair, in confidence — both, as

you know, are, like ourselves, members of the Harmonic Lodge in St. Thomas, first placing them formally on the \*\*\*\*\*p — of my late half-brother and his bringing the witch-doctor into my house for their infernal deviltry, whatever it may have been.

Both, as soon as I had made this affair clear, were of one mind with me. This, in truth, was a matter for swift and very definite action. We must take into our joint confidence the Policemaster — our brother Freemason, fortunately — Knudsen and dispatched Marianna with it to the Christiansfort.

Knudsen arrived in response to this summons just at four, and we sat down to a dish of tea in the dining room to discuss the matter. Knudsen agreed with us fully. He would send out a pair of his *gendarmes* at once, apprehend Pap' Joseph, lodge him in the fort safely, and bring him here to the scene of this last crime of his at nine o'clock that evening. Macartney and Hansen promised to be here at that hour, and Herman, who had returned from the hospital, drove them back to Macartney House.

KNUDSEN AND his prisoner — handcuffed fast between two *gendarmes* who sat with him in the lower gallery on three adjacent chairs from eight-forty-five until the punctual arrival

of Macartney and Hansen on the stroke of nine — were the first to arrive. Knudsen and I sat together in my office waiting for the other two men in the interim. Knudsen had a glass or two of rum, but I excused myself from joining him in this refreshment.

Upon the arrival of Macartney and his son-in-law Cornelis: Hansen, we dismissed the *gendarmes*, Knudsen instructing them to wait at the farther end of the inner gallery, and took the prisoner into the office where he was provided with a chair. We sat around and looked at him.

This man, rather small and very black, was decently clothed and, except for an extremely villainous expression about the eyes, looked commonplace enough. Yet a mere word of direction from him into the ear of my butler had caused that faithful old servitor of our family for more than thirty years utterly to refuse to obey my orders and dispose of the filthy beast stabled in my hall!

I had sent all the servants home, not even retaining Herman. We had thus the entire house to ourselves. Knudsen nodded to me as soon as we had bestowed ourselves, and I addressed the witch-doctor.

"Joseph," said I, "we know that you were here in this house with Mr. Otto Andreas, and that you used my hall for some

of your incantations. This, of course, places you outside the law on several counts. The code forbids the practice of *obeah* in the Danish West Indies, and you were, plainly, breaking that law. Also, since you have been doing so here in my house, I am concerned in the matter. I have talked the affair over with these gentlemen and, I will be frank with you, there is some of it which we fail to understand; in particular why I discovered a beast stabled in my residence which, as I understand it, is some of your doings. We have brought you here, therefore, to hear your story. If you will reply clearly and fully to what we desire to ask you, Herr Knudsen assures me that you will not be thrown into gaol in the fort, nor prosecuted. If you refuse, then the law shall take its course in this case.

"I ask you, therefore, to explain to us, fully, what this animal was doing in my hall; also what part Mr. Otto Andreas had in the affair. Those are the two matters on which we desire to have the fullest information."

Malling, this black fellow simply refused to speak. Nothing, not a word, not a syllable, could we get out of him. Macartney tried him, Mr. Hansen spoke to him; finally Knudsen, who had waited without saying anything, put in his word.

"If you refuse to reply to the two questions," said he, "I shall take steps to make you speak."

THAT WAS ALL. It occupied, in all, more than half an hour. At any rate, my watch showed it nearly a quarter before ten when we paused, and Macartney and Hansen, and I looked at each other, baffled; apparently we could get no satisfaction out of this wretch. Then, in the pause which had ensued, Knudsen, the police-master, addressed me. "Have I your permission to send my men into your kitchen?" he asked in his curt manner.

I bowed. "Anything you desire, Herr Knudsen," I replied, and Knudsen rose and walked out into the inner gallery, and through the half open door of the office we could hear him saying something to his *gendarmes*. Then he returned and sat, silently, looking at the black fellow who now, for the first time, appeared somewhat moved. He showed this only by a slight and characteristic rolling of his eyeballs. Otherwise he gave no more sign of communicativeness than he had vouchsafed previously.

We sat thus, waiting, until a few minutes after ten o'clock, Knudsen and the black fellow quite silent, the others of us conversing slightly among ourselves. Then, at eight minutes past ten, one of the *gendarmes*

knocked at the door and handed in to Knudsen, who had arisen to open to this summons, a burning charcoal pot and the bayonets from the two men's rifles which had been detached, doubtless by their officers' command. I sensed, at this, something extremely unpleasant. I knew Knudsen's well-earned reputation for downrightness. He is, as you are aware, one of those ex-non-commissioned officers of the Danish army who, as a professional handler of men, takes no stupidity from criminals or others with whom his profession causes him to deal.

He set the charcoal pot on the middle of the floor of my office, thrust the two bayonets, points inward, directly within the bed of glowing coals and, turning to the man who had waited at the door, commanded, "Bring Larsen here, Krafft, and bind this fellow with his hands behind him and his feet trussed together."

The policeman spoke in Danish which, I suppose, the black fellow did not understand. Yet I could perceive him wince at the words, which plainly had to do with his subsequent treatment, and his dark face took on that grayish shade which is a Negro's paling.

Almost at once the two *gendarmes* were at the door again. The fellow addressed as Krafft

saluted and said, "We have no rope, Herr Commandant."

I remembered at that the bull handler's rope which Macartney's man, when carried out for his trip to the hospital, had left behind him. I recalled it as it lay on the floor near that horrid platform, as I had myself left the room after the destruction of the animal. No one had been in the hall since that time, some seven hours ago.

"Pardon, Herr Knudsen," said I, rising. "If you will send one of these men with me, I will provide him with a rope."

Knudsen spoke to Krafft, who saluted once more and, stepping aside for me to pass out into the inner gallery, followed me a pace behind while I walked along it toward the doorway leading into the hall.

Malling, my friend, I hesitate to go on; yet, go on I must if I am to make it clear to you, after this long rigmarole which I have already, by nearly a whole day's steady composition, succeeded in setting out for your perusal and understanding. I will try to set it down, the dreadful thing, the incredible horror which blasted my sight and will invade my suffering mind until death closes my eyes for the last time on this earth; my real and sufficient reason for leaving this island where I have lived all my life, which I love as my native land, where all my friends live.

Attend, then, friend Malling, to what I must, perforce, set out on this paper, if you are to understand.

I REACHED the door, throwing it open, which let out upon us more of that wretched odor which was, of course, all through the house despite opened windows. Lighting a match, I set alight the nearest lamp, a standing, brass mounted affair, which stands quite near the doorway beside my mother's Broadwood piano-forte.

By this light we proceeded, the *gendarme* Krafft and I, along the room toward the other end where the platform still stood, where the carcass of the animal hung, its head over the edge, awaiting the very early morning when old Herman, according to my orders, was, with the assistance of two laborers he was to secure, to remove it and set about the cleaning of the room immediately afterward.

Two-thirds of the way along the room I paused and, pointing in the general direction to where it lay, on the mahogany floor, told Krafft that he would find the rope somewhere near the place I indicated. I caught his silent salute with the corner of my eye as I paused to light another standing lamp, since the light from the first, dimmed by its large ornamental shade,

left us, at this point, in semi-darkness and the mantelpiece and platform above it in thick darkness. I had just turned down the circular wick of this second lamp when I heard Krafft's scream and, dropping the box of matches I held upon the floor, wheeled just in time to see him, his hands above his head in a gesture of abandoned horror, sink limply to the floor not five paces from the front of that platform.

I peered toward him, my eyes for the instant slightly dazzled from having been close to the flame of the newly lighted lamp, and then, Malling — then, my friend, I saw *what he had seen*; what had set this tough grained man handler of a policeman to screaming like a frightened woman, and himself hurtling to the floor in an uncontrollable spasm of stark, unmitigated terror. And as I saw, and felt the room go around, and envisaged the conviction that this was the end of life — as I myself sank, helpless with the fearsome horror of that eldritch uncanniness, toward the floor, the light fading from my consciousness in the onset of a merciful oblivion, I heard, behind me, the agitated voices of Knudsen and Macartney and young Mr. Hansen as they, summoned by Krafft's scream, crowded into the hall through the doorway. I had seen, dimly



in that not too good illumination from the two standing oil lamps, not the head of the bullock I had destroyed, but — *the head and shoulders of my half-brother Otto Andreas; a great blackened hole in his forehead; and the blood dried on his inverted face;* as he hung, stark now, and ghastly lifeless from over the edge of the voodoo platform . . .

I awakened in my office surrounded by my acquaintances, a drizzle of cold water upon my face and neck, and the taste of brandy in my mouth puckering my lips. I was on my back on the floor and, looking up, I perceived that the *gendarme*, Larsen, stood over the still seated black fellow, his pistol held near the back of the man's head. As I sat up, assisted by young Mr. Hansen, Knudsen turned away from the group and, taking a now glowing bayonet out of the charcoal pot with his gloved hand, curtly ordered Larsen to turn the Negro out of his chair and stretch him, bound as I perceived, according to orders, upon the floor.

The anticipation sickened me slightly, and I closed my eyes; but I had determined not to interfere with Knudsen, who knew his own methods and was, after all, here upon my own request to force from this villain the confession which should clear

up the mysteries we had vainly propounded to him.

I was soon in my chair, pretty well restored by the vigorous measures which had been taken with me, and able to hear what Knudsen was saying to the supine prisoner. I saw, too, the pale and stricken face of Krafft, just outside the doorway. He too, it appeared, had recovered.

I WILL abbreviate a very ugly matter, an affair which sickened me to the heart; which was, nevertheless, necessary as procedure if we were to secure the information we desired.

In short, the black fellow, even in his present distressful condition, refused, point blank, to reveal what we had inquired of him, and Knudsen, with his own hand, tore open his shirt and applied the cherry-red bayonet to his skin. A horrid smell of scorched flesh made itself apparent at once, and I closed my eyes, sick at the dreadful sight. The Negro screamed with the unbearable pain, but thereafter clamped his thick lips and shook his head against Knudsen's repeated orders to answer the questions.

Then Knudsen put the bayonet back, thrusting it well into the glowing charcoal, and took out the other one. He stood with it in his hand above the Negro. He addressed him, in his usual curt, cold and hard tones, "My man, I warn you

seriously. I make you sensible that you will not leave this house alive. I shall go over your entire body, with these, unless you reply to the questions you have been asked."

With the conclusion of this warning speech, he abruptly pressed the flat of the bayonet across the Negro's abdomen, and after an anguished howl of pain, Pap' Joseph capitulated. He nodded his head and writhed out of twisted lips his consent.

He was at once lifted back into the chair by the two *gendarmes*, and then, gasping, his eyes rolling in a mental anguish plainly greater than that of his grievous bodily hurts, he told us . . .

It appears that there are two "supreme offerings" in the dreadful worship of these voodooists; one the affair of a human sacrifice which they name "the goat without horns", and which, according to our informant, was never put into practice in these islands; and the second, their ceremony which they call the "baptism". This last, it was, which had been perpetrated in my house! And — one could hardly guess it, even at this stage of this narrative of mine for your private eye, friend Malling — *it was Otto Andreas who was the candidate!*

I should, perhaps, have mentioned that his body, supposedly buried a day and a half before, and which had, to my dis-

traction and that of the man Krafft, been seen hanging over the edge of the sacrificial platform, had been taken down and now lay, decently disposed by Knudsen and Larsen along four chairs in the hall during the short period when Macartney and Hansen had been engaged in reviving me and bringing me back to my office. Earth and splinters of pitch pine were upon the body.

The culmination of that foul rite which they impiously call the baptism is the sacrifice of an animal; sometimes a goat, sometimes a young bull. In this case the bull had been selected.

Before the knife is drawn across the throat of the animal, however, the candidate for the baptism, on hands and knees, and stripped naked as the hour he was born, must "confront" the goat or the bull. Yes, Malling, as I gathered it from those twisted, pain galled lips of that black fiend, the two, the candidate and the sacrificial animal, gaze for a long period into each other's eyes; the belief being that in this way the two, for the time being, exchange, as it were, their personalities! It seems incredible that it should be believed, yet such is what he assured us of.

In the ordinary course, the officiating priest having determined that this alleged exchange of personalities has indeed taken place, the animal is a-

bruptly killed, its throat being cut across with a sharpened machete or cane-bill. At this, the personality of the human being retransfers itself to its proper abode; yet, some modicum of it is supposed to remain in the animal, and this, on the animal's death, passes out of it and into the custody of the thing they name the Guinea Snake, which is the ultimate object of their nefarious devotions, as a sacrifice, given up by the candidate thereto.

Such, as it was explained to us, is the underlying principle of a voodooist's baptism.

That is how it would have occurred in the case of Otto Andreas, if there had not been a kind of unexpected hitch. Naturally, one would gather, the nervous and mental strain upon such a candidate would be an extremely severe one. In the case of my half-brother it proved too severe.

Otto Andreas had dropped dead, doubtless from heart failure induced by the strain of it all, there on the platform, just at the very moment before Pap' Joseph himself, as he assured us, who was officiating at the baptism, was to slaughter the bull.

The personalities, as the voodooists believed, were at that moment entirely interchanged. In other words, lacking the release and relocation of these, which would have come at the

knife stroke across the bullock's throat, the "soul" of the sacrificial animal died at the moment of Otto Andreas' unexpected death, and — the *soul of Otto Andreas remained in the bullock*.

"An' so, sar," finished Pap' Joseph, with a devilish leer in his eyes, and addressing me, "yo' is destroy the life of yo' bruddah, sar, when yo' is so hasty to shoot de bull!"

The witch-doctor, it transpired from a portion of this account, had given old Herman the orders — not knowing of my imminent return home — to keep the bullock in the hall, because he was "making magic" to get the "souls" exchanged back again! It had, of course, been necessary to bury Otto Andreas' body. But, we were assured, if the bullock had been left alone, it would, by now, have been changed back into Otto Andreas, a process which, the witch-doctor gravely assured us, required not only a great skill in magicking like his own, but considerable time!

THERE WAS only one thing to be done that night. Pap' Joseph was sent back to the Christiansfort, with instructions that he was to be liberated the following morning at six o'clock. Then the four of us, having placed a blanket about the body of Otto Andreas, carried it among us to the cemetery. Ar-

rived there with the two spades we had fetched along, Hansen and Knudsen set to work to dig up the coffin. It was moonlight and, of course, at that hour of the night no one was in or even near the cemetery.

The earth, even for a newly made grave, was unusually loose, it seemed to all of us. A spade struck wood, about four feet down. Macartney spelled his son-in-law. I offered to do the same for Knudsen, but he refused. Within a minute he said in a puzzled tone, "What is this!"

He squatted down the in the grave and with his gloved hands threw up a mass of soft earth about something he discovered.

Malling, they had disinterred a smashed coffin, a coffin burst out of semblance to the narrow box which is designed to be the last housing place of a human form. And no wonder it had been burst asunder, from the monstrous thing which came partially to light. We did not wholly uncover what we had discovered down there under the surface of the holy ground. There was no need, Malling.

It had been the stiff, unyielding, bony limb of a four legged horned animal, from which Knudsen had thrown up the loose earth. A bullock was buried there, where some thirty-six hours previously men had interred the body of my late

half-brother Otto Andreas Gannett. Pap' Joseph, it appeared, under that direful compulsion to which he had so reluctantly yielded, had told us the truth.

We hastily enlarged the grave sufficiently to receive the body we had brought with us and, leaving a higher mound than had met us on our arrival, though beaten down with the flats of the spades, we came back swiftly and in silence to my house and there, as brother Freemasons, swore that, save for this information to you, our fellow brother Freemason, swore which I specified as an exception, we would none of us — and the others during the term of my life — reveal anything of what we had heard to any man. Knudsen answered for his *gendarmes* and, from the reputation he bears as a disciplinarian, I have little fear that either of them will ever mention what part of it all they were privileged to witness.

This will serve, then, my friend, to account to you for why I am leaving Santa Cruz and going to Scotland whence our family came here four generations ago, when these islands were for the first time opened to the settlement of planters other than natives of Denmark through the generosity of the Danish government. I can not stay in this cursed house where such things as confound man's understanding have taken place;

and so I place my property in your kind and efficient hands, my friend Malling, in the belief that I have made my reasons for such a decision clear.

I am taking with me to Scotland my faithful old servant, Herman. I would not leave him here to endure the tender mercies of that pestiferous scoundrel Pap' Joseph, whose orders, out of faithfulness to me, he broke. One can not tell what would happen to the poor old fellow if I were so inconsiderate.

I remain, yours most faithfully and to command,

ANGUS GANNETT

P. S. Knudsen, of course, insists that some blacks, followers of Pap' Joseph, merely exchanged the bodies of the bullock and my half-brother, during the interval, after my shooting of the beast, in which my hall remained unvisited by any of my household.

—A. G.

### III

I FINISHED THE account and handed it back to Herr Malling. I thanked him for his extraordinary courtesy in allowing me to read it. And then I walked straight to Gannett House to look once more at that hall where all this mysterious succession of strange affairs had taken place. I sat down, after Robertson had let me in,

in the place usually occupied by Mrs. Garde, and Robertson brought me a solitary tea on the great circular tray.

I could not forbear glancing up toward the place once occupied by that board platform where a voodoo baptism had all but taken place; a strange rite interrupted just before its culmination by the collapse of long dead and gone Otto Andreas, with his unquenchable desire for the fellowship of the Snake! There are strange matters in our West Indies. Well, God was, always had been, always will be, stronger than the Snake. There would be, I felt well assured, no recurrence of that strange vision which had projected itself after all these years, of that bullock's "almost human" eyes, reproachful, pathetic, as Mrs. Garde had said, looking down at the grim Scot with his steady hand leveling his great horse pistol at the point between those eyes.

Mrs. Garde returned to her hired house infinitely refreshed by her sea voyage, her mind occupied with other affairs than the horror of the wall near the portrait of her late husband.

There was, as I had anticipated, no recurrence of the phenomenon.

Naturally, Mrs. Garde was solicitous to inquire what I had done to remove the appearance which had done so much to

destroy her comfort and happiness, but I was loath to explain the matter to her, and managed never to do so. Perhaps her splendid gentility sensed that I did not wish to offer her explanations, Mrs. Garde was a Boston Unitarian, and Boston Unitarians are apt to take things on an intellectual basis. Such are not likely to be sympathetically familiar with such other-worldly affairs as the exorcism of a house, routine affair as it had been to good Fr. Richardson.

Besides, I have no doubt, Mrs. Garde was so pleased at the non-recurrence of the old annoyance, that she probably attributed it to something popularly called "eye strain". There was nothing to remind her of that bloody-faced, pathetic-eyed bullock, drooping to its final fall. Otto Andreas Gannett was not even a memory in Christiansted. We had many delightful tea parties, and several evening dances, in that magnificent hall of Gannett House that winter in Christiansted.

---

### INTRODUCTION (*continued from page 4*)

As I write this, we have hopes of improving the distribution situation, which has not been a good one as the many of you who have written in to say that you could not find MOH on sale at your local newsstands have testified. If these hopes are realized, however, it will still be some time before the benefits to be derived from them become visible, although you will see them before we do. That is, you will see MOH on sale where you had not seen it before; but we must wait for the sales report to come in, which takes some time after an issue is withdrawn from sale.

Because of this time-lag, we have been forced to make an unhappy decision: until the benefits become visible to us, we are forced to keep each issue of MOH on sale for a longer period than two months. Heretofore, our inability to appear each and every other month has been due to difficulties on the part of our printer; now, the less regular appearance will have to be a planned one. We hope it will be a short siege, and that you will continue your letters of comment and support, so long as MOH makes you care. RAWL

# Coming Next Issue

The clock struck nine. . . . We both started; but the doctor, I am sure, was really frightened.

He half rose in his chair, seized his watch in his left hand, and stood gazing from it to the clock in a sort of palsy. A look such as I never saw in a mortal came into his eyes; they fairly danced and glittered, and as he gazed at me, bewildered, I would have sworn that they dissolved, and that I looked not into the eyes of one, but into those of a hundred.

Snap! The doctor closed his watch. "My!" he sighed. "How that did startle me! I thought it was ten and I was too late. Let us have some wine."

He reached for the bell and pressed it energetically, "Do you know, Mr. Robinson," he asked while we were waiting, "do you know what it means to me?"

"Naturally, I do not," I replied, "your never having told me."

"Well, I'll tell you," he said, leaning back in his chair, "it means this: In an hour's time I shall be either alive or dead. If my experiment is a success, you will see a miracle; you will see me young, strong, handsome, a being to marvel at and admire. If it should fail, you will witness the most abject and miserable death that ever has been or will be seen on this earth.

"In a few moments from that time, I shall begin to dwindle, to stumble, to struggle, to cry out; my pleading will ring in your ears for years to come; when you are dreaming and when you are waking you will see my fearful image; I shall be a horror and an abomination to you. In a few moments I shall be no larger than this inkstand, and I shall be growing smaller and smaller until at last I disappear — a mere speck of nothing forever and forever."

*Don't miss this bizarre tale of the man who became*

## ALMOST IMMORTAL

by Austin Hall

*and, among many other items, we hope to offer you*

### VALLEY OF THE LOST

by Robert E. Howard

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### HEREDITY

by David H. Keller

*First magazine publication of this powerful, grim tale of horror.*

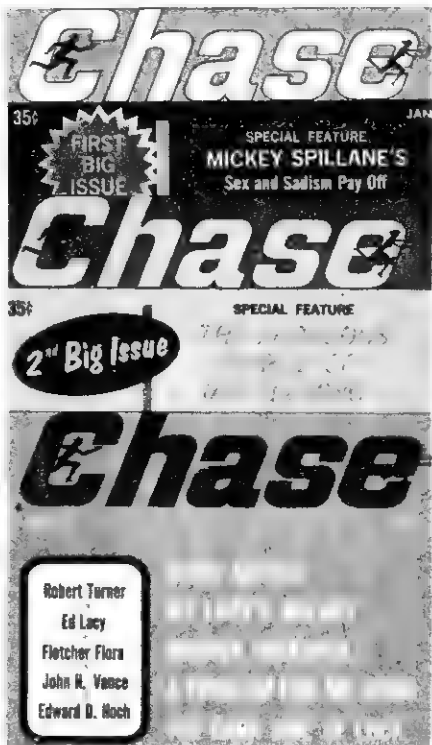
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## It Is Written . . .

CARL KIDWELL'S cover illustration for *Torture of Hope* on our August issue brought more comment than any other cover design or illustration we have used thus far. A little more than four-fifths of you were heartily in favor; and the interesting thing is that more than half of the readers who checked "no" on the question of whether they liked the cover specified that it was either the white background, or the "garish" lettering of the word "Horror" that they did not care for. This question of whether we should continue to use so dramatic a presentation of the word "Horror" remains open. I can tell you that it is felt here that this sort of presentation is needed to draw attention to the magazine on the newsstand and may be helpful. The editor liked the original lettering (as did those readers who object to the present lettering) but the sales reports indicated that it apparently did not attract sufficient attention, even allowing for the difficult distribution problem. At present, then, I can only repeat that the question is open and that while I cannot promise a change in the lettering (or that those who dislike the present arrangement would like the change that might be made any better), later returns — both sales reports and your comments — might influence us to try something different.

DEPARTMENT OF DISCOURAGEMENT: We have heard recently that Arkham House plans to issue a volume of Lovecraft-Derleth collaborations which will include *The Lurker on the Threshold*. Now it is true that Arkham House has a small press run, so that its total circulation of any particular volume is nothing like the total circulation of an issue of *MAGAZINE OF HORROR*. We could, then, reprint *Lurker*, confident that a considerable majority of our readers would not have seen it in its first edition, or would have purchased the new edition. Every story we reprint will be familiar to some reader or readers; though the odds against any particular reader having read every reprinted story in every issue, or in any particular issue, are high enough so that we need not worry about them. However, the installments of *Lurker* would occupy a large part of the two issues in which the story would run (we envisioned it as a two-part serial) and if a sizeable fraction of you have either read it, or plan to obtain the Arkham House re-issue, this is something to give us pause.

Lovecraft continues to be the most asked-for author — the nominations for his stories continue to be double those for stories by any other author — despite the fact that all the short stories of value are now back in

print (see the book reviews this issue). Obviously many, many readers would like to read this or that short story by HPL, but either cannot afford to buy the book, or just do not want that much Lovecraft. We feel, under the circumstances, that we should heed these requests by offering a short story by HPL now and then — at least once a year. Can those of you who already have all of Lovecraft's works, or all of them that you want, be considerate of the rest?

Writing to express appreciation of the kind words so many of you have had for the two stories of his we have reprinted, Seabury Quinn says, in part: "*Cloth of Madness* . . . was conceived during the hard winter of 1918-19, when I was stationed at the Port of Embarkation, Hoboken. You may have heard that men in uniform were not permitted to be served drinks during W.W.I., at least not stateside, but most of us had civvies in our quarters, and one night some other officers and I decided to go 'buffing' (out of uniform) to New York. The cocktail lounge (as we'd call it today) of the Prince George Hotel in East 28th Street was papered at that time with a red paper striped with wavy lines of black, and during the course of our innocent merriment one of my companions said, 'Quinn, if I had to look at that paper any length of time I'd go stark, staring mad.' Thus the plot germ was implanted in what I am pleased to call my brain." Mr. Quinn also gave us a little background on the first Jules de Grandin story, *The Horror on the Links*: "It had its basis in a statue which used to adorn the Museum of Natural History — a gorilla abducting a most attractive nude lady. Incidentally, that story has been published in several foreign anthologies, including Selwyn & Blount's famous *Not at Night* series."

GLENN LORD, about you will hear more in our next issue, has taken us to task on our comment in the June MOH to the effect that Robert E. Howard's tales showed no sense of humor, reminding us of REH's humorous Western yarns. Correction accepted; we had entirely forgotten them, and re-read *A Man-Eating Jeopard* (in the Arkham House *Skull-Face and Others*) a few days after reading Mr. Lord's comment. Amusing it is indeed. However, we do not recall any humor in the weird fiction — at least, nothing to compare with the humor to be found in so many of Burroughs' novels — unless you want to cite Conan's dropping a nude girl into a cistern in *Rogues in the House*. I'm not sure I'd qualify it.

An unidentified reader, who thought the August issue our best to date, notes on the back of the preference coupon: "I am glad you did not print any science fiction tales this time — they don't belong in MOH." And on the rating sign, our happy reader puts a big zero (meaning "outstanding") beside A. Hyatt Verrill's science fiction novelet, *The Plague of the Living Dead!* (The same sort of thing occurred in relation to Laurence Manning's science fiction tale, *Caverns of Horror*, last year.) . . . Obviously these readers are trying to tell us *something* important . . .

James Edward Turner praises *The Cloth of Madness*, but notes: "I think I did detect one flaw though. What effect that ghostly design had on the men who duplicated it on wall-paper."

We thought of that, too, friend Turner, then remembered that in order for the design to have its full effect, people had to be put in a position where they could not turn away from it. Both the old raja and Jamison Alvarde locked their vic-

tins into rooms where they could see nothing but the design.

Jack Cordes writes from Peoria, Illinois: "You'll notice that I didn't rate *The Torture of Hope*. Not that the story wasn't good. It was nicely written. But I've been a fantasy fan for over twenty-five years and *The Torture of Hope* just isn't fantasy. To me it's like trying to judge a cat that's been entered in a dog show."

We certainly agree with reader Cordes that *The Torture of Hope* isn't fantasy — but want to remind all of you that *MAGAZINE OF HORROR* is not confined to fantasy tales. We offer as wide a variety of unusual, bizarre, etc. stories, including elements of the gruesome and the frightening, as we possibly can in each issue. Granted that most of them would qualify under the large heading of "fantasy" fiction, we still do not feel that *MOH* should be restricted to this category.

A reader asks of us if we know and can list any sources from which old issues of *WEIRD TALES* can be purchased. Having long been out of touch with the back issue market in general we can presently suggest only F AND S BOOK CO., Richard Witter, PO Box 415, Staten Island, New York, NY 10302; Mr. Witter publishes a quarterly catalogue which includes the dates and prices of all back issue of *WEIRD TALES*, and various other weird and science fiction magazines he has in stock. And we will gladly list here in future issues the address of any other dealer in old issues of *WT*, etc., who also publishes regular lists of old weird, fantasy, etc. magazines specifying dates available and prices, which is supplied to us. (We cannot run the lists, of course.)

Charles Hidley writes: "Isn't it interesting how a good idea like Pri-

luck's *The Girl at Heddon's* is still outshone by a less imaginative theme (Chambers) that is an example of greater writing skill? Even though I own *The King in Yellow*, I've enjoyed reading Chambers in *MOH* (especially *The Yellow Sign*) — and now this unknown selection. (*In the Court of the Dragon*).

"I suppose one of the basic building blocks in the temple of the outrageous is an indefinable and subtle attraction to elements of a sado-masochistic nature. Whatever I may know of my personal allotment of same surely excludes A. Hyatt Verrill's brand. Perhaps I relish a refinement (or decadence) in the category: I can only label as 'inchoate sadism' the animal torture, cannibalism, bestiality abounding in *Plague of the Living Dead* — as a tasteless, banal bore. . . .

"It was inevitable that the Kafka-Genet-Ionesco influence would make itself felt in the weird fiction genre — but I'd rather it didn't. I love them *there*, where they belong and am only confused by things like *The Door* and *A Dream of Falling* and maybe even *The Burglar-Proof Vault* showing up in *MOH*. . . .

"It can be sort of fun not having illustrations — one can provide one's own: Hugh Rankin for *Placide's Wife*; Finlay for *Cloth of Madness*; L. B. Coye for *Torture of Hope*; Matt Fox for *Girl at Heddon's*; Frank Ut Patel for *The Tree*; C. C. Senf for *Plague of the Living Dead*; and a Brundage cover for *P.W.* (and, of course, Napoli for *Come Closer*)."

We are not entirely against illustrations for weird fiction by any means, recalling the wonderful drawings by Rankin, for example. His style in itself was so weird that he could give an eerie tone to a very ordinary scene. But there are specific difficulties in addition to the cost of good interior artwork, which

is presently beyond us: (1) you need just the right combination of artistic skill and imagination; relatively few illustrators have this (2) in many stories there is nothing illustratable that is really weird (3) in many others, the only scenes or scenes which would make for a really fine weird illustration would give too much away. I doubt for example, whether even Finlay could do a convincing illustration of the ghastly design on the *Cloth of Madness* in black and white; and to have given an effective illustration for *The Girl*

at *Heddon's* would also have given the ending away. Looking through my old copies of *WEIRD TALES*, as I often do, I've been impressed with the fact that during most of its years a large percentage of the artwork was irrelevant, ineffective, or gave too much away — the crowning horror in the latter category being Senf's picture for *The Whisperer in Darkness*. Which does not mean that we could not offer an occasional effective (we hope) illustration when it became feasible to use them outside the cover. RAWL

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## The Reckoning

The letter department is made up when the copy (original mss., layouts, etc.) first goes off to the printer, while the Introduction, filler material, and this department is prepared a month or so later when the issue is closed. Sometimes happenings within that period make for interesting discrepancies, and you saw one in this issue. We decided to let it stand, since it underlines our repeated assertion that *your* expressions of your desires can have an effect upon us. A month ago, we thought a change in the logotype on the front cover no more than a possibility; today it is becoming an actuality, thanks to you.

Three stories were in close contention throughout the entire voting period — the first three in this reckoning — and the fourth and fifth place stories see-sawed constantly, too. Here is how you finally placed them, and beginning now we shall give you the entire list, as many of you have asked for this.

(1) *The Cloth of Madness*, by Seabury Quinn; (2) *The Plague of the Living Dead*, by A. Hyatt Verrill; (3) *Placide's Wife*, by Kirk Mashburn; (4) *The Torture of Hope*, by Villiers de L'Isle-Adam; (5) *The Girl at Heddon's*, by Pauline Kappel Prilucik; (6) *Come Closer*, by Joanna Russ; (7) *The Tree*, by Gerald W. Page; (8) *In the Court of the Dragon*, by Robert W. Chambers, which was the most controversial item this time.

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# Have You Missed Any of Our Previous Issues?

*Many readers have asked us if back issues of MAGAZINE OF HORROR are still available. The answer is — yes, for the time being, they are; but some issues are not so plentiful as they were. While they last, they can all be had for the cover price of 50c per copy, postpaid.*

**Aug. 1963:** *The Man With A Thousand Legs* by Frank Belknap Long; *The Yellow Sign* by Robert W. Chambers; *The Unbeliever* by Robert Silverberg; *The Last Dawn* by Frank Lillie Pollock; *Babylon: 70 M.* by Donald A. Wollheim; *The Maze and the Monster* by Edward D. Hoch.

**Nov. 1963:** *Clarissa* by Robert A. W. Lowndes; *The Space-Eaters* by Frank Belknap Long; *The Charmer* by Archie Binns; *The Faceless Thing* by Edward D. Hoch; *The Strange Ride of Morrowbie Jukes* by Rudyard Kipling; *The Electric Chair* by George Waight.

**Feb. 1964:** *The Seeds of Death* by David H. Keller; *The Repairer of Reputations* by Robert W. Chambers; *The Place of the Pythons* by Arthur J. Burks; *The Seeking Thing* by Janet Hirsch; *They That Wait* by H. S. W. Chibbett; *Jean Bouchon* by S. Baring-Gould; *Luelia Miller* by Mary Wilkins-Freeman.

**May 1964:** *The Dreams in the Witch-House* by H. P. Lovecraft; *The Mark of the Beast* by Rudyard Kipling; *What Was It?* by Fitz-James O'Brien; *Beyond the Breakers* by Anna Hunger; *A Dream of Falling* by Attila Hatvany; *The Truth About Pycraft* by H. G. Wells; *Last Act: October* by Tigrina.

**Sept. 1964:** *Cassius* by Henry S. Whitehead; *The Ghostly Rental* by Henry James; *The House of the Worms* by Merle Prout; *Five-Year Contract* by J. Vernon Shea; *The Morning the Birds Forgot to Sing* by Walt Liebscher; *Bones* by Donald A. Wollheim.

**Nov. 1964:** *Caverns of Horror* by Laurence Manning; *The Mask* by Robert W. Chambers; *The Pacer* by August Derleth; *The Life-After-Death of Mr. Thaddeus Warde* by Robert Barbour Johnson; *The Door to Saturn* by Clark Ashton Smith; *The Moth* by H. G. Wells.

**Jan. 1965:** *The Shuttered Room* by H. P. Lovecraft and August Derleth; *The Phantom Farmhouse* by Seabury Quinn; *The Thing From Outside* by George Allan England; *Black Thing at Midnight* by Joseph Payne Brennan; *The Shadows on the Wall* by Mary Wilkins-Freeman; *The Oblong Box* by Edgar Allan Poe.

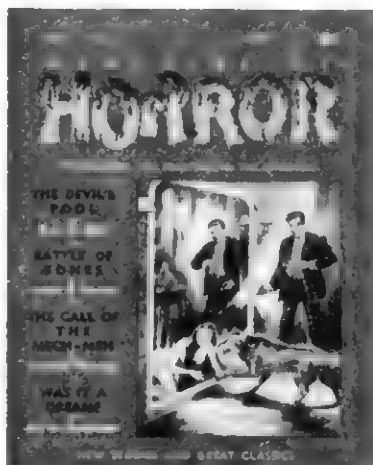
**Apr. 1965:** *The Dead Who Walk* by Ray Cummings; *The Hand of Glory* by R. H. D. Barham; *The Black Laugh* by William J. Makin; *Orpheus's Brother* by John Brunner; *The Burglar-Proof Vault* by Oliver Taylor; *Jack* by Reynold Junker.

**June 1965:** *The Whistling Room* by William Hope Hodgson; *Skulls in the Stars* by Robert E. Howard; *The Distortion out of Space* by Francis Flagg; *The Night Wire* by H. F. Arnold; *Sacrilege* by Wallace West.

**Aug. 1965:** *The Cloth of Madness* by Seabury Quinn; *Placide's Wife* by Kirk Mashburn; *The Torture of Hope*, by Villiers de l'Isle-Adam; *The Girl at Heddon's* by Pauline Kappel Priulick; *Come Closer* by Joanna Russ; *The Tree* by Gerald W. Page; *The Plague of the Living Dead* by A. Hyatt Verrill.

**Nov. 1965:** See next page.

# Subscription and Back Issue Page



You don't *have* to mutilate this issue, or fill out any form, in order to subscribe to MAGAZINE OF HORROR or to order back issues. The number "12" in the address tells us that you have this issue, and a subscription should start with number 13. But so long as you type or print your name and address clearly, mention the number of the issue with which your subscription should start, and let us know just which back issues you desire, if any, then a letter with the proper amount enclosed is just as good as a coupon.

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## Reader's Preference Page

**(there's more space on the flip side)**

**Comment — Suggested stories, authors, etc.**

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper appears to be a standard notebook page or a sheet of stationery. There is no handwriting or other markings on the page.

Mail this coupon to **MAGAZINE OF HORROR**, c/o Health Knowledge, Inc., 119 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y. 10003  
(or better still, write us a letter!)

**Reader's Preference Page**

(there's more space on the flip side)

*Please rate the stories in the order of your preference, as many as possible. Ties are always acceptable. If you thought a story was bad (rather than just last place), put an "X" beside it. If you thought a story was truly outstanding, above just first place, mark an "O" beside it. (Then the next-best would be "1".)*

THE FACELESS GOD

MASTER NICHOLAS

BUT NOT THE HERALD

DR. MUNCING, EXORCIST

THE AFFAIR AT 7 RUE de M-

THE MAN IN THE DARK

THE ABYSS

THE BLACK BEAST

Did you find the cover attractive? Yes

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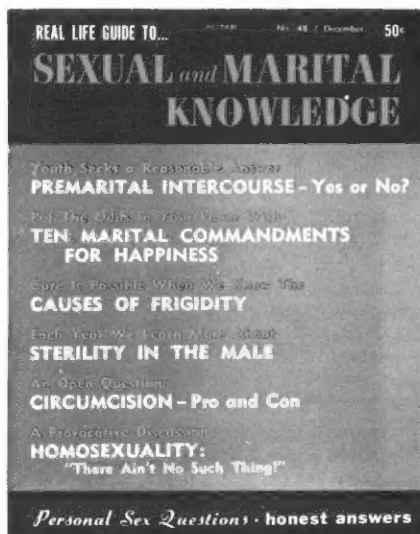
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